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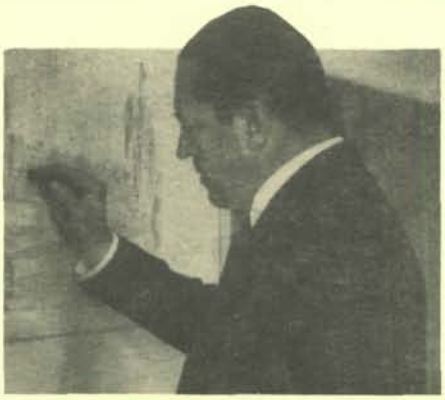

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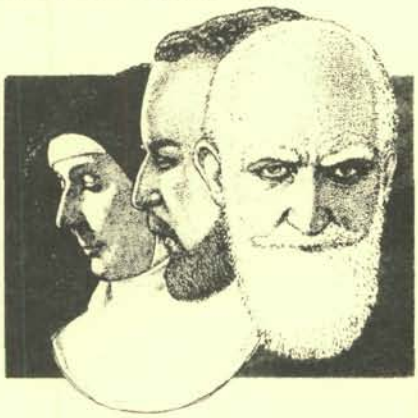

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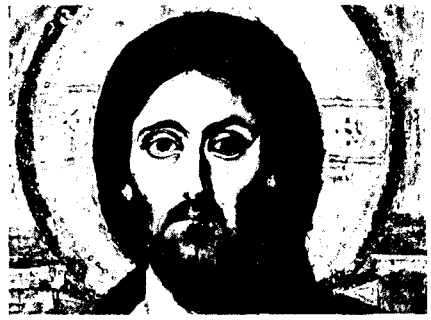

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THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR (ISSN 0003-0937), published quarterly since 1932 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Copyright © 1985 by the United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa.

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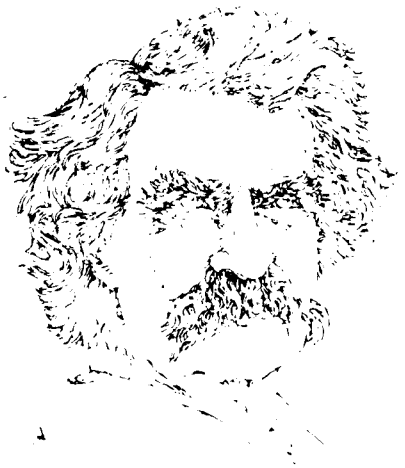

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Out of My Mind . . . . . .

The Birth of Modern Cosmology

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

In 1965 Arno A. Penzias and Robert W. Wilson of the Bell Telephone Laboratories published their discovery of what has turned out to be the remnant, or fossil radiation, left over from the Big Bang, the explosion in which space and time were created. During the past year or so I have been studying the history of this discovery, and the more I have studied it, the more bizarre it has become to me. It is so bizarre that, if someone made up the history as part of the plot of a novel, I doubt that anyone would find it believable. But, believable or not, it is what happened. It is this history that I wish to describe here, but before I do, it is appropriate to give a very brief general history of the subject of cosmology itself.

One of the things that races of mankind have had in common is the attempt to account for the universe as a whole—to make a cosmology. It is probably not surprising that many of these early cosmologies involved an intertwining of the supernatural and the familiar. Here is an example from an early Chinese myth: "First there was the great cosmic egg. Inside the egg was chaos, and floating in chaos was P'an Ku, the Undeveloped, the divine Embryo. And P'an Ku burst out of the egg, four times larger than any man today, with a hammer and chisel in his hand with which he fashioned the world." This homey vision of the universe as an egg persisted well into the Middle Ages. The twelfth-century visionary Hildegard of Bingen remarked, speaking of the universe, that she saw "a gigantic image, round and shadowy; like an egg, it was less large at the top, wide in the middle and narrower again at the base."

The illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages show the ovoid universe festooned like one of those Easter creations Fabergé made for the czar. The creation passages of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* begin: "In the beginning nothing at all existed here. This whole world was enveloped by Death-by-Hunger. For what is death but hunger? And Death bethought himself: 'Would that I had a self!' He roamed around, offering praise: and from him, as he offered praise, water was born." What could be more revealing about a civilization than the question, "For what is death but hunger?" "In the beginning of creation," begins the book of Genesis, "when God made heaven and earth, the earth was without form and void, with darkness over the face of the abyss, and a mighty wind that swept over the surface of the waters. God said, 'Let there be light and there was light. . . . He called the light day and the darkness night." If the Big Bang cosmology is right, there would have been lots of light, and other radiation, at the origin of the universe. The first "night" would not have occurred for thousands of years until the radiation had cooled enough so that it was no longer in the visible part of the spectrum.

A notable exception in the ancient world to the idea that the universe had to have a beginning, and hence a creator, was Aristotle. One might call Aristotle the Fred Hoyle of antiquity. He, like Hoyle, believed in something like the "perfect cosmological principle," according to which the universe has neither a beginning nor an end but just *is* throughout eternity. Needless to say, this idea came into collision with all of the major non-Asiatic post-Aristotelian religions. A way out of this impasse was suggested by the twelfth-

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✪ This essay is adapted from the introduction to *Cosmological Constants*, a collection of essays co-edited by Jeremy Bernstein and Gerald Feinberg, which will be published by Columbia University Press next spring.

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century Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides, whose *Guide of the Perplexed* was read by Thomas Aquinas and others and who took the position that Aristotle had never really *proved* that the universe had no beginning. Indeed, in 1654, the Irish divine James Usher, on the basis of a lifetime of study of biblical chronology, announced that the Creation had occurred on October 26, 4004 B.C. at 9:00 A.M.—presumably Greenwich mean time.

Isaac Newton, whose long life overlapped with that of Bishop Usher, very likely spent at least as much time on biblical chronology—the sort of dating that Usher worked on—as had the good bishop. He certainly spent more time on chronology and alchemy than he did on what we would call physics. Newton is responsible for the first cosmological statement in what we think of as the modern vein. While Newton was perfectly willing to accept the idea that the universe had a finite origin in time, he realized that there was a potential paradox if it was also finite in spatial extent. Since all matter was gravitationally attractive, if any clumping occurred in a finite cold universe, the effect would run away and, in short order, all the matter in the universe would collect itself in one place—a clear-cut disagreement with observation. He saw that the way out of this was to make the universe spatially infinite so that there would be no "place" where the matter could collect. In 1692 Newton wrote in a letter to Richard Bentley, "But if the matter was evenly disposed throughout an infinite space it would never convene into one mass; but some of it would convene into one mass and some into another, so as to make an infinite number of great masses scattered at great distances from one another throughout all that infinite space."

By the nineteenth century a substantial body of evidence had accumulated—such as the work of geologists like Charles Lyell—to show that Bishop Usher's Creation date had to be wrong. The evidence was summarized in the enormously influential book *The Principles of Geology*, which the Scottish geologist Charles Lyell published in three volumes in the 1830s. This book, the first volume of which Darwin took with him on the *Beagle*, persuaded Darwin that geological processes were evolutionary, and he became a subscriber to a developing school of thought that held that the lifetime of the Earth might be, if not infinite, at the very least unimaginably long. I do not, by the way, know what date, if any, Newton fixed for the Creation, but toward the end of his life when he was working on biblical prophecies, he concluded that the end of the world could not come before the year 2060. Let us hope he was right.

In the nineteenth century, the science of thermodynamics was created, and one of its major architects was William Thomson, later Lord Kelvin. Reasoning that all geological processes dissipate heat, he began with the assumption that the Earth started as a molten ball and argued that the life of the Earth could vary only between twenty and four hundred million years, and that the Sun must have a lifetime of the same order of magnitude, something that appeared to be in conflict with the theory of evolution, which seemed to require countless millennia for its unfolding. By the end of the century, radioactivity had been discovered, and the lifetime of the Earth had been extended upwards of two billion years in comfortable agreement with both biological and geological evolution.

But modern cosmological theory began in earnest in 1917 with the publication in the Prussian Academy proceedings of a paper by Albert Einstein called "Cosmological Considerations on the General Theory of Relativity." Einstein had published his general theory of relativity and gravitation a year earlier. In many ways, the 1917 paper is a strange one. Einstein himself did not seem entirely comfortable with it. At one point he writes, "In the present paragraph I shall conduct the reader over the road that I have myself travelled, rather a rough and winding road, because otherwise I cannot hope that he will take much interest in the result at the end of the journey." This is a far cry from the answer he gave when he was asked if the test of the general theory being carried out by Eddington and others produced results that disagreed with the predictions of the theory. "I would feel sorry for the Dear Lord," he replied, "because the theory is right anyway."

In the 1917 paper Einstein attempted to construct a cosmology based on a small number of general principles that he took as experimental axioms. The first of these we still believe to be correct and, if anything, even

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more correct than when Einstein assumed it in 1917. This is the notion that, on average, the universe is homogeneous and isotropic—meaning that wherever we stand in it we will see the same large-scale features in any direction that we care to look. Essentially all the modern cosmological theories incorporate this principle.

When Einstein wrote his paper it was not clear that any of the stellar objects were outside of our own galaxy, let alone that galaxies were in motion with respect to each other. So Einstein assumed that to the first approximation the stars were all uniformly distributed and stationary with respect to each other. He of course knew that there were small so-called proper motions of stars, but he did not know that there were large secular motions. All of that came in the next decade. Having made these assumptions, he realized at once that they were in conflict with his own general theory of relativity and gravitation. This is just the analogue of the Newtonian dilemma come back again in modern guise. Newton had resolved this dilemma by making space infinite, and Einstein resolved it by changing the law of gravitation, something which, in later years, he referred to as the "greatest scientific blunder" he had ever made. He added to his original equations something that is known as the cosmological constant term, which, in effect, corresponds to a small repulsive force added to the attractive force of gravitation. The new equations have a solution in which the stars are uniformly distributed and stationary.

In Einstein's new theory it appeared as if there were no solutions to the gravitational equations in the absence of matter. Since one usually thinks of matter as the source of gravitation, this seemed very nice. The only trouble was that in the same year the Dutch astronomer Willem de Sitter produced a second solution to Einstein's new equations that had no matter in it at all, meaning that Mach's principle was not an automatic consequence of the new theory. This was one of the reasons why Einstein eventually abandoned it. The de Sitter model had the remarkable feature that, if test particles were introduced into the empty space, they would move away from each other—that is, expand. When, in 1929, Edwin Hubble published his data showing that the galaxies in the universe actually expand away from each other in such a way that the speed of expansion increases proportionally to the distance the galaxies are apart, such an effect might have been expected. Theoretically, it is not clear to what extent Hubble, who apparently had a general distrust of theorists, was led to his discovery by de Sitter's paper, to which he gives reference. This paper, one must emphasize, was based on Einstein's mutilated theory of gravitation.

Among the readers of Einstein's 1917 paper was a twenty-nine-year-old Russian mathematician and meteorologist named Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Friedmann. Friedmann had been born into a talented musical family in St. Petersburg in 1888. He became a brilliant mathematics student at the University of St. Petersburg, from which he graduated in 1910. Soon after, he took up theoretical meteorology as a specialty and in 1914 published a basic paper on temperature inversion in the upper atmosphere. That year, the beginning of the war, he volunteered for service in an aviation detachment, and in 1917, the year of Einstein's paper, Friedmann became a section chief, and later director, of the first Russian factory used to manufacture aviation instruments. In 1920 Friedmann took up a post in Petrograd (now Leningrad) and taught physics and mathematics at the university. Among his students was the young George Gamow.

Gamow describes his encounter with Friedmann in his delightful autobiography *My World Line*. The only problem with the autobiography is that it is next to impossible to find out from it the precise date at which anything happened. Since Gamow took his Ph.D. from the University of Leningrad in 1928, at the age of twenty-four, and since Friedmann published the first of his great papers on relativity and cosmology in 1922, one must assume their encounter took place sometime in between. Friedmann, who was not a professional physicist, had nonetheless gotten caught up in the excitement that followed the 1919 experimental confirmation of Einstein's prediction that gravity bends light. Being a remarkable and gifted man, Friedmann did not simply learn the theory, he improved on it. He found a solution to Einstein's *original* equations, which represented a universe with matter in it that expanded forever, corresponding to a space of negative curvature. He also found a solution for positive curvature

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that expands and contracts periodically and indefinitely. He does not seem to have considered explicitly the case of zero curvature, which corresponds to an indefinite expansion at an even, decreasing rate.

Einstein devotes an entire long appendix of the second edition of his book *The Meaning of Relativity* to Friedmann's solution, a far cry from the note he wrote in 1922, just after the publication of Friedmann's paper, which was an attempt to refute it. Einstein withdrew this note shortly afterward. (In a footnote in the appendix, Einstein remarks that he would never have introduced what he calls the "cosmological member [*gleider*]" if Hubble's results had been available to him.) Sometime in 1924 or 1925 Friedmann announced a course of lectures at the University of Leningrad entitled "Mathematical Foundations of the Theory of Relativity," and, Gamow writes, "Naturally, I landed on the bench of the classroom for the first of his lectures." It had been Gamow's intention to work with Friedmann on relativistic cosmology, but, Gamow writes, "During one of his flights on a free meteorological balloon, Friedmann received a severe chill which resulted in pneumonia and death." The *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* says Friedmann died of typhoid fever. In any case, at age thirty-seven he was dead.

Whether Friedmann, Gamow, or the Abbé Georges Lemaître should be called the Father of the Big Bang Theory we can leave to the historians. Lemaître was a Belgian astronomer who had been ordained as a priest. In 1927 he rediscovered Friedmann's solutions and, after Hubble discovered the recession of the galaxies two years later, actually made the hypothesis that the whole thing began in a cosmic explosion. In the beginning there was, according to Lemaître, a "cosmic egg"—again an egg—that contained all the matter in the universe. It then exploded and, voilà, here we all are. I do not mean to make light of Lemaître, but, as far as I am concerned, quantitative modern Big Bang cosmology begins with Gamow.

For various reasons, I do not think Gamow's cosmology was taken seriously enough when he was active in promoting it in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He died in 1968, so he did have the satisfaction of seeing the beginnings of the working out of the modern Big Bang cosmology. Part of the reason that the early work was not taken more seriously was the state of the field itself. This was a time when two rival theories—the Steady State theory of Hoyle, Bondi, and others and the Big Bang theory—seemed as if they could account about equally well for such phenomena as there were to account for. The two theories were, nonetheless, diametrically opposite in their underlying assumptions. In the Steady State theory the universe has no beginning and no end and remains essentially the same at all times, in all places. The Big Bang is what it says, a big bang, which is a completely singular state that may never be reproduced. It is an evolutionary theory rather than a static one. When a field is in a state like this, it is very difficult for many people, myself included, to take it entirely seriously. Since the proponents could not bring much to bear in the way of convincing evidence for one theory or the other, they spent a good deal of time insulting one another, something at which both Hoyle and Gamow were expert.

In his autobiography Gamow reproduced his version of the Old Testament book of Genesis according to Hoyle. It ends with, "It was so complicated that nowadays neither Hoyle, nor God, nor anybody else can figure out exactly how it was done." In his later years, at least, Gamow was known for enjoying the odd drink. At a conference of astronomers he was spotted in a bar at his quaff by a bunch of Young Turks who bribed a waitress to go up and say, "There is a telephone call for you, Professor Hoyle." Without missing a beat, Gamow replied, "Don't throw Hoyle on troubled waters." Gamow was a larger-than-life, genuine Russian eccentric, with an impish and irrepressible sense of humor. The fact that he inserted the name of Hans Bethe between his own and that of the first author, Ralph Alpher, and tried to get his other collaborator, Robert Herman, to change his name to Delter so that he could add it after his own on a cosmology paper was not likely to make people take it as seriously as they might have. (Herman, by the way, wisely refused.)

With this in mind, it comes as a pleasant surprise to re-read the original papers now and to find out just how good they were. This is not to say that they agree with present ideas on how the elements were formed. Gamow had a uniformitarian theory according to

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which *all* of the elements—light and heavy—were formed by one basic sequence of processes. In the beginning—after the Big Bang—there was what Gamow called the Ylem-derived, so named from the Greek *hyle*, meaning either "wood" or "matter." The Ylem is the primordial—the Ur-stuff—out of which everything else is to be made. In the original versions the Ylem was taken to consist primarily of neutrons and photons—very energetic electromagnetic quanta. In the later versions neutrinos were added and play a decisive role. After the explosion the Ylem expands and cools according to Friedmann's cosmological equations. The neutrons are unstable particles, and in something over ten minutes, half of any sample decays into protons, electrons, and neutrinos.

Gamow's idea was that all the elements were to be built up step-by-step like Tinkertoys by adding neutrons one at a time. To begin with, a single neutron would capture a single proton, releasing energy in the form of a photon and leaving behind the nucleus of heavy hydrogen—the so-called deuteron. Then the deuteron would capture another neutron, forming a still heavier isotope of hydrogen, one that is unstable and decays into a light isotope of helium. By a succession of captures and decays, Gamow hoped to construct the entire periodic table. That this scheme does not really work is not my main concern here, except to note that we now believe that the heavy elements do not have an early-universe cosmological origin but are manufactured in stars during supernova explosions, a process that still goes on. The star-cooking of elements was something that Hoyle and his people worked on in the context of the Steady State theory, and this part of their work is still valid and useful even if one no longer takes seriously the underlying cosmology.

What does concern me here is the fate of the radiation. Let me describe how Gamow, and especially his co-workers Alpher and Herman, predicted the present temperature of the radiation. The first step was taken by Gamow and published in a brief note in the *Physical Review* in 1948. This was an analysis of the conditions under which heavy hydrogen would be formed in the early universe. Gamow noted that none—or no appreciable amount—would be formed before the temperature dropped to about a billion degrees, something that happens some three minutes after the Bang. Before this, any deuterium formed would be ripped apart by the ambient radiation. For appreciable amounts to be formed, Gamow argued, the rate of formation should be comparable to the rate at which the universe was then expanding, which is something he could calculate from Friedmann's equations. By equating the rates, he then determined the density of the neutrons and protons in the Ylem when the temperature was about a billion degrees.

This number was about 10^{18} particles per cubic centimeter—about a million times less dense than ordinary matter. In contrast, the density of the ambient radiation was about that of water. So one is dealing with matter in a very peculiar state. Gamow did not take the next step (at least he did not publish it) of finding the *present* temperature of that same radiation today, which was at a billion degrees at three minutes after the Bang. This step was taken by his two young collaborators, Alpher and Herman, whom Gamow had recruited when they were, more or less, graduate students. In 1948 as part of a letter about the early universe to the British journal *Nature*, they announced, without proof, that the present temperature of the ambient radiation should be about 5° above absolute zero. Keep in mind, in order to appreciate the prescience of this prediction, that we now *know* that the radiation temperature is about 3° above zero. In a paper in the *Physical Review* in 1949, they gave the details.

The idea is a very straightforward one. Gamow had found the density of neutrons and protons at a billion degrees—the temperature where the deuterium-cooking reaction is in equilibrium. (By refining the calculation, Alpher and Herman concluded that .6 billion degrees was closer to the equilibrium temperature.) As space expands, the universe becomes more and more diluted. Even if particles do not disappear in collisions, their density diminishes simply because the space they find themselves in is blowing up like a balloon. It is easy to show from Friedmann's mathematics that the density decreases as the third power of the temperature does—the cube of the temperature. So, if we can measure the present density of neutrons and protons, we can compare this to the computed density at a billion degrees and solve the

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equation for the present temperature. The present density Alpher and Herman more or less knew, since this is one of the things Hubble had measured when he counted visible galaxies. This is the only density of luminous matter and is therefore a lower boundary on the real density, since there may be a great deal of non-luminous matter. Indeed, we now believe that most of the matter in the universe is non-luminous. The number Hubble gave was about a millionth of a nucleon per cubic centimeter, to be contrasted with the 10^{18} per cubic centimeter at a billion degrees. Doing these density numbers more accurately and comparing them gives the five degrees. It is an astonishing prediction, and, what is equally astonishing, it played no role whatsoever in the actual discovery of the fossil radiation.

Many suggestions have been made about why this happened. Alpher and Hermann think that it might have had to do with their publishing in physics journals rather than in astronomy journals. Perhaps. But all the people who took part in the final discovery were physicists and not astronomers. It could well have had to do with the fact that in none of the papers where they made and repeated this prediction did they state explicitly how it could be tested. This is something that they certainly could have done. They knew that the five-degree radiation would have a spectrum in the microwave regime—from several centimeters down to tenths of a centimeter. This was the region of the spectrum that had received so much attention during the war because radar detection devices used it. Although they didn't say so in their published papers, they did consider the possibility that such devices might be adapted to the detection of the fossil radiation.

By 1954 Charles Townes and his students at Columbia, among them Arno Penzias, had developed the first masers (*m*icrowave *a*mplification *s*timulated *e*mission of *r*adiation), which are very sensitive devices for detecting microwaves. It is not clear, at least to me, whether the fossil radiation could have been detected before the invention of the maser. In any case nobody tried to detect it. Probably, as I have attempted to suggest, the most important reason was that the whole field of cosmology was not taken very seriously by the scientific community. It was one of those circular things. It was not taken seriously because of the lack of crucial data, and there was a lack of crucial data because it was not taken seriously.

The first clear statement that the existence of the cosmic photons might have experimental consequences—at least to my knowledge—occurs in a brief paper by the Russian scientists A. G. Doroshkevich and I. D. Novikov, which was first submitted in 1963 in the Soviet journal *Doklady* and then translated in the United States in 1964. The relevant section of the paper is its last paragraph. Here the authors note that measurements of background radiation in the microwave regime "are extremely important for experimental checking of the Gamow theory." Curiously, they give a reference to a paper by Gamow in which the ambient radiation is not mentioned. They go on to say that this radiation should have a temperature of between one and ten degrees, again giving no specific reference. Then comes a most remarkable sentence in which the authors note that such measurements had already been made, and from them they conclude that the ambient radiation must have a temperature very close to zero.

The reference they give is to a paper of E. A. Ohm of the Bell Telephone Laboratories, which Ohm published in 1961 in the *Bell System Technical Journal*. There is, indeed, such a paper, and it does, indeed, give a report of such a measurement; but the Soviet scientists misread the conclusions of the paper. Ohm's result, as I will explain, was perfectly consistent with the final result of three degrees. In any event, this Russian paper, which none of the principals in the discovery read until well after the fact, had no influence on the final events leading up to the discovery, which, in fact, had *already* been made by the time the Russian paper appeared in the United States.

I want now to turn to the matter of how the telephone company got itself into the business of radio astronomy and how Penzias and Wilson came upon the three-degree radiation. The Bell Telephone Laboratories were created by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) on the first of January in 1925. Its mission was to supply technology not only to the telephone system, for which AT&T had the monopoly, but also to other communications technologies, such

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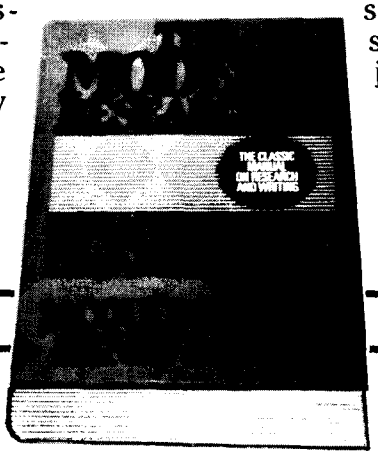

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as overseas shortwave radio service, which had been inaugurated by AT&T in the late 1920s. In addition to its main laboratory in New York City, Bell Labs had a couple of field stations in New Jersey. It was in one of these—the one at Holmdel—that a young radio engineer, Karl Jansky, was given the job of trying to measure and record shortwave static. By 1933, after four years of observation with a directional antenna, Jansky separated the static into three basic components: nearby thunderstorms, distant thunderstorms, and a continual hiss that varied in a regular way but reached its maximum four minutes earlier each day when a certain set of stars were due south of Jansky's antenna. Jansky had inadvertently detected extra-terrestrial radio emission and had, more or less, accidentally, founded the science of radio astronomy, a field that Bell Labs promptly got out of and remained out of for the next thirty years.

In 1945 the science-fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke, who was then in the Royal Air Force, conceived the notion of the communications satellite. Clarke wrote several articles about it, which did not attract any particular attention. (Recall that Sputnik was not launched until 1957.) However, even before Sputnik, in 1954, the noted Bell Labs engineer John Pierce re-invented the idea. (Incidentally, Pierce wrote science fiction under the pseudonym of J. J. Coupling. He was also the man who coined the word *transistor*.) As a well-placed member of the Bell Labs, Pierce was in a position to implement the idea. In the late 1950s NASA had a program to develop a large plastic weather balloon, and this balloon was exploited by Pierce in 1960 to bounce microwave radio signals between New Jersey and California—something that was known as the Echo project.

To pick up signals from the Echo, use was made of what was known as a horn-reflector antenna, the prototype of which had been designed at Bell Labs in 1942. It looks like a large Alpine horn with an opening at one end that admits the microwave signals. One of the virtues of the horn-reflector antenna is that it is very directional. If you point it up toward the sky, you get next to no noise from the ground. A large version was built in 1960 by a Bell engineer named Arthur B. Crawford and set up on what is known as Crawford Hill, the small radio laboratory near Holmdel. This was the apparatus that Ohm used when he reported the background noise.

To understand Ohm's paper, which his Russian readers did not, and the subsequent developments, it is very important to note that radio astronomers translate the various noise sources into an equivalent temperature. Astronomers imagine that the telescope is in a bath of radio signals characterized by some temperature, and they then give their results in terms of that temperature that would be required to produce the equivalent noise. In Ohm's paper, there is a table of all the expected sources of noise. What is called the "sky" noise is given an equivalent temperature of about 2.3°. Somehow the Russian scientists decided that this accounted for Ohm's observation, leaving nothing left over for the Big Bang ambient radiation. Actually, when Ohm added up all of his sources of expected theoretical noise, he found a total of 18.9° with an error of 3°, whereas the actual noise he found when he *measured* it was 21° ± 1°, a result he got by demanding that the theoretical noise and the measured noise overlap. He had no reason to expect that they didn't.

Arno Penzias joined the Crawford Hills laboratory radio research group in 1961. He had just finished his Ph.D. at Columbia, where, under the guidance of Charles Townes, the inventor of the maser, Penzias built one of the early masers, which he used to try to locate intergalactic hydrogen. As far as I know, he had never taken a course in cosmology. His degree had been in physics. His boss at Bell, the Viennese-born architect-turned-physicist, Rudolf Kompfner, a man of very wide interests, had decided that once the large horn-reflector had served its purpose in the communications satellite business it could be used for radio astronomy. The job was given to Penzias. In 1963 he was joined by Robert Wilson, who had taken his Ph.D. at Cal Tech. Wilson had taken a course in cosmology that was given by Hoyle. Neither man had read any of the papers of Gamow and his collaborators. Wilson's degree was also in physics. As there was only one position for a radio astronomer in Kompfner's group, they decided to split it in two with each man spending half of his time on telephone-company business.

Both Penzias and Wilson were anxious to re-do their theses, which they did not think

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were very good. To this end they began to work over the horn reflector to make it into a genuine scientific radio telescope. Penzias installed what is known as a "cold load"—a liquid helium source at a known temperature. Wilson built a very elaborate switch that could be set either to the cold load or to the antenna so as to compare the temperatures. When the antenna was pointing upward, they discovered almost at once that the antenna was about three degrees hotter than they expected it to be. This was Ohm's result, but now given to an accuracy that simply could not be ignored. The first data showing the anomaly was taken on May 20, 1964. One could call this the day that the Big Bang radiation was discovered.

The problem was that Penzias and Wilson had no idea of what they were seeing. To them it appeared as if their antenna had, for some unknown reason, too much noise. They spent the next year trying to get rid of it. They tried everything they could imagine. They found two pigeons had been nesting in the horn. They got rid of the pigeons and, in Penzias's phrase, the "white dielectric material" they had left behind. Penzias and Wilson thought perhaps New York City might be the culprit, but at their wavelength (7 centimeters) it was essentially noiseless. They thought it might be an aftereffect of the atomic bomb atmospheric tests of 1962 but were able to rule this out. The effect persisted night and day for four seasons—an entire year.

While this was taking place at Holmdel, at Princeton, some thirty miles away, a completely independent enterprise was unfolding. Robert Dicke, who is now Albert Einstein University Professor of Science Emeritus, had become interested in a version of the Friedmann cosmology according to which the universe goes through alternating phases of expansions and contractions. After each contraction there is a Big Bang, and, Dicke reasoned, after each Big Bang there should be radiation left over. He, too, had never read the papers of Gamow and his collaborators. However, Dicke made an estimate of the present temperature of the radiation by assuming that it does not contribute more to the present energy density of the universe than the visible matter. This gave him an upper limit of 40°, putting the radiation in the microwave regime. He had forgotten that in a collaboration done in 1946, just after the war, he and three colleagues had performed an experiment showing that this radiation had to have a temperature of less than 20°. The existence of this experiment had been forgotten by everyone. In any event, he recruited three young Princeton faculty members to work with him: P. J. E. Peebles, a theorist; and P. G. Roll and D. T. Wilkinson, two experimentalists.

In short order Peebles rediscovered the deuterium arguments of Gamow and his collaborators—whose papers he also had not read—and concluded that the ambient photon temperature should be 10°, which he then refined downward. Meanwhile Dicke, Roll, and Wilkinson were busy on the roof of the geology building at Princeton constructing a small low-noise radio antenna to detect the very radiation that Penzias and Wilson had been observing thirty-some miles away for about a year. How long all of this might have continued to go on is not clear, but in January 1965 Penzias made an incidental phone call to a fellow radio astronomer at M.I.T. named Bernard Burke. Burke asked Penzias how his measurements were going, and Penzias described the trouble they had been having with the noise. As it happened, Burke had heard from a colleague at Carnegie-Mellon about a talk that this colleague happened to hear when he was visiting Johns Hopkins. The talk was given by Peebles. Burke thought that Penzias, Wilson, and the Princeton group might have some things of mutual interest to discuss. Penzias called Dicke, and shortly thereafter the four Princeton people came to Holmdel to see the horn and look at the data. They, in turn, described the cosmology to Penzias and Wilson, who were somewhat skeptical, or at least reserved. After all, they had only measured what was supposed to be a black body curve at one wavelength (7 centimeters). In addition to which, Wilson, who had taken *his* cosmology from Hoyle, preferred the Steady State theory.

In July 1965, two letters that opened the era of modern cosmology appeared in the *Astrophysical Journal*. Dicke, Peebles, Roll, and Wilkinson wrote a note in which they explained the cosmology, and Penzias and Wilson described their measurement without committing themselves to the cosmological explanation. Wilson, in his Nobel Prize address—he and Penzias have the 1978 Nobel

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Prize for physics—noted laconically, "We thought . . . that our measurement was independent of the theory and might outlive it." It hasn't.

In the Penzias and Wilson letter, the work of Gamow and his collaborators is not cited. They had never read it. In the Princeton paper the first two references are to papers by the Gamow group; the second reference is to a paper by Alpher, Follin, and Herman in which the first modern calculation of light element formation is carried out. In neither of these papers is the prediction of the radiation temperature mentioned. So the Princeton group was not aware of it. This meant that it took some time before the Gamow group got proper credit for it. Even now many people working in the field have not taken the trouble to read these early papers to see what was done, and not done, before 1965. By December 1965 Wilkinson and Roll had completed their measurement at three centimeters, confirming the Penzias and Wilson result. The field was wide open. It has now become a scientific industry.

What the moral of this bizarre history of scientific discovery is I am not sure, beyond the obvious one that science is done by human beings who behave like human beings. But there is an epilogue that may illustrate what Pasteur meant when he said, "In science chance favors *only* the prepared mind." If one asks in what year the three-degree radiation was first observed, one can make a good case for the year 1941. Two astronomers, J. C. Adams and A. McKellar noted something peculiar about the light that was coming to us from one of the stars in the constellation Ophiuchus. In its spectrum were a number of dark bands, indicating that some interstellar gas was absorbing the starlight at very specific frequencies. They identified one of the lines as belonging to the molecule cyanogen—one carbon and one nitrogen atom. What struck them was that this line was split in three—three closely spaced lines. One of the lines belonged to what is known as a "vibrational state" of the molecule, and it was a line that was expected, and it represented the normal jiggling of the atoms of the molecule. The other two lines were very mysterious. They represented states of rotation of the molecule and could only appear if the molecules were somehow being perturbed—if they found themselves in some sort of radiation bath, for example. McKellar estimated that this bath, whatever it was, would have to be at a temperature of about 2.3° (the best present estimate for the ambient photon radiation is 2.7°). This anomoly in the spectrum was fairly well known to both spectroscopists and astronomers. In the 1950 edition of his book *Spectra of Diatomic Molecules*, the Nobel laureate in chemistry Gerhard Herzberg commented on it and on the question of the temperature that seemed to be needed. He wrote that "a rotational temperature follows, which has of course only a very restricted meaning." This was two years after Alpher, Gamow, and Herman had clearly spelled out just what this meaning was. He, too, hadn't read their papers, and they hadn't read his book.

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Life and Letters . . . . . .

A Mere Journalist

ARISTIDES

I began keeping a journal not long after it became clear to me that I wished to be famous. Perhaps that is not quite accurate, for, as I think back on it now, it occurs to me that I always wished to be famous. As other people have an imagination for disaster, I have had an imagination for fame. I can remember as a boy of nine or ten returning home alone from the playground in the early evening after dinner, dodging, cutting, stiff-arming imaginary tacklers on my way to scoring imaginary touchdowns before enormous imaginary throngs who chanted my name. Practicing free throws alone in my backyard I would pretend that I was shooting them at a crucial moment in a big game at Madison Square Garden. Later, as a boy tennis player, before falling off to sleep, I imagined the Duchess of Kent presenting me with the winner's trophy on the center court at Wimbledon. I wrote none of this down, because I had not yet become a scribbling man. Fame was still a general, not a particular, desire. Once I determined to become a writer the desire became quite particular. As for the extent of my fame today, it is best measured by way of analogy through an anecdote a friend told me about having once asked a historian of medicine at what point in history physicians began saving more patients than they killed. "I regret to report," the historian replied, "that we haven't achieved it yet." I can say roughly the same thing about my fame.

But should fame ever arrive, I shall be prepared for it. Off and on for more than twenty years I have been keeping a journal. One expects a famous writer to keep a journal. In my case, jumping the gun somewhat, I began keeping a journal well before I had done much writing. Yet one has to start somewhere, and why not with a journal or diary or notebooks? "I have never understood why people write diaries," Max Beerbohm said. "I never had the slightest desire to do so—one has to be so very self-conscious." No argument about the need for the journalist to be self-conscious since the journal is the personal house organ for self-consciousness. But it is hard to believe that so subtle a writer as Max Beerbohm hadn't the requisite self-consciousness. My own guess is that Beerbohm didn't keep a journal or diary because he didn't need one; fame came to him early—while he was still at Oxford, in fact—and thus he was quite without need of what is the first function of a young writer's journal: a place to grouse, a place to dramatize one's condition in prose, and a place to bemoan the fact that, once again, this time in the instance of oneself, the world in its ignorance is failing to recognize another genius.

It may be, too, that, along with so many other arts and games, keeping a journal is an activity that one must begin while still fairly young. By thirty it may be too late to begin. For the journalist, habit is nearly everything. Mordecai Richler once remarked that, for a writer, all experience is divided between the time before he decides to write and the time after. After the decision has been made, life becomes in large part copy, all experience grist for a mill that closes down only at death. For the keeper of a journal, experience is turned into words before the sun sets twice; sometimes, like dry cleaners, he gives same-day service. When something of interest occurs in the life of a journal keeper, he not only notes it mentally but also notes that he must note it in his journal. A short while ago, for example, I was at dinner with a number of academic historians. The group among contemporary historians known as the cliometricians came up for discussion. "Whatever happened to the cliometricians?" someone

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asked. I thought immediately of the radical feminist historians, and I leaned toward a historian seated on my right, a woman of a certain age and the sophistication to go with it, and whispered, "They were replaced in academic fashion, I believe, by the clitoromeretricians." Not bad, I thought to myself; must note it down. You will find the remark in my journal under October 2, 1985.

You will find a great deal else besides such mots in my journals, but one thing you will not find is anything approximating a record of contemporary history of the kind available in the diaries of Harold Nicolson or Chips Channon or Richard Crossman. This for the simple reason that I have had no serious or intimate connection with contemporary history, and perhaps an insufficient interest in it. The only large public event noted in my journals is the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the dreary events surrounding his funeral. Even here, though, I noted his death, in the wholly egotistical manner of the journalist, less for its effect on the country than for its effect on the hero of my journals, me. What I thought of John F. Kennedy—which, at the time, wasn't very much—cannot be of any great interest to the world; nor, I have reasoned since, can what I think of other public events and political tendencies of our time be of any staggering significance. Who really cares what I think of, say, the Sino-Soviet dispute? (For the record, I happen to be rather partial to this particular dispute, which I hope will continue all of my days.)

Along with an absence of political content, neither will you find much in the way of spirituality in my journals. Unlike *The Intimate Journal of Henri Frederic Amiel*, from whose pen flowed an abundance of such sentences as "Love that is sublime, single, invincible leads straight to the brink of the great abyss, for it speaks at once of infinity and eternity," my journal seldom strikes the religious note. In it my arguments with God go unrecorded. The closest I get to spirituality is self-pity, which, I recognize, is not quite the same thing. Especially when young, I could be very strong in the line of self-pity; I whined exceedingly well. Here, for example, is our hero on December 29, 1962, at the age of twenty-five, living in New York and working as an editor on a political magazine in a job he rightly realized was a dead end:

> Well, I have worked one year at this job. What have I learned? What have I lost? What have I missed?
>
> Learned: (1) A few writing tricks, though mostly tricks with other people's writing; (2) a trade, or—perhaps more accurately—a wide but not altogether firm knowledge of how to go about a trade; (3) a few pieces of extraneous information; (4) how to talk about politics—quite different from learning how politics truly work; and (5) how to read and judge a composition somewhat more surely than before.
>
> Lost: (1) A good deal of, sadly, enthusiasm; (2) youthful intransigence on many subjects and issues where intransigence is the only proper attitude; (3) sympathy; and (4) some hair.
>
> Missed: (1) Sitting down to do some writing that I might take pride in; (2) friendship.

As I grew older, this self-pity swelled and expanded nicely into a fine case of melancholia, so that, on October 28, 1970, after a falling-out with a dear friend, I discover our boy, now thirty-three, noting that "at such moments you know how tenuous are the strongest of human bonds—and you rediscover what you at this instant feel yourself a fool for ever forgetting: that you are absolutely alone in the world." Returning to the subject some seven months later, he says of human loneliness and vulnerability, "Perhaps for the best, most of us are unable to keep this devastating fact in mind for much of the time. I am currently reading Conrad (*Victory*), who never for a moment forgot it." Our jolly melancholic's notion of a good time is insomnia, that is if you believe an entry of February 16, 1971, which in part reads: "It is now nearly two in the morning, and unless I get extremely tired, I think I shall try to stay up to see the dawn in. I have ample provisions: cigarettes, tea, an all-night classical music station, the *Letters of Thomas Mann*, a new (to me) book of Wm. Hazlitt essays, some writing to do, and (for now) this notebook." Our hero had just gone through a divorce, of which, mercifully, his journal says little directly; but, not to worry, there is sufficient dolorosity to go round. Thus on July 20, 1971, we find him inditing, "Five years ago I found much about life absurd; nowadays I find many of the same things merely sad. It would be good to be able to regress a little in this sphere." As a Borscht Belt comedian might say, "Hey, c'mon folks, these are the jokes—yuk it up!" The comedian's name in this case might be young Jackie Werther.

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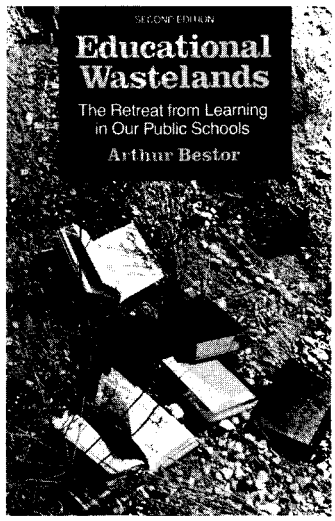

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Self-pity, melancholia, depression—best of course to do without all these; but if suffer from them one must, next best is not to impose them on others, or so I was brought up to believe. A journal, though, is not a bad place to deposit them. For people who do not slide easily into the public therapeutic mode, a journal can function as a book of consolation. For many among us, writing things out appears to be therapy enough; it is also a solution that cuts out the middleman, the therapist, thereby in one stroke eluding both the problem of transference and the transference of funds. There is, though, a middleman named Dr. Ira Progoff who wishes to cut himself back in. Dr. Progoff runs something called a "journal workshop," in which he holds out the promise, through the use of journals in something he calls the "Intensive Journal" process, of "a potential for growth in a human being . . . as infinite as the universe." (Beware doctors bearing botanical metaphors, and especially doctors bearing them into workshops.) But in any case Doc Progoff has come too late for me. In my journal, and as much as possible in my life, I have done my best to cease complaining and have taken as my motto the line from the beer commercial that runs, "I guess it doesn't get much better than this."

Not that I am committed to the cheerful view, or that I decided that complaint is always a mistake. But I do note, in my journal for April 17, 1975, the following shift in emphasis openly declared: "The time has come to turn this journal away from being a chronicle of complaint—an Iliad of woe—and into a name-dropping affair. Through my ersatz eminence as editor of a respected, if still less than dazzling, magazine, I find myself more frequently in touch with writers and intellectuals of some—how to say it?—standing. Might as well note down these meetings, for the practice they provide in portraiture and for a 20-watt light bulb on the age."

Here I have to report, with regret, that my journals are not, as the English say, as "namey" as a lively literary journal ought to be. Saul Bellow appears from time to time, Lillian Hellman is there, and so are John Sparrow and Martha Graham. I. F. Stone shows up when I am in Greece, and Henry Kissinger puts in a cameo appearance. But my journals contain no Mitford sisters, no Cyril Connolly, no Evelyn Waugh (insulting me as a boorish American, doubtless), no Diaghilev, no Virginia and Leonard Woolf, no André, Willie, or Morgan, no Prince of Wales and Mrs. Simpson, no royalty whatsoever, I regret to say. In his diary the snobbish Chips Channon reports once having two queens dine at his home on the same evening, but, in his utter elation, he became too drunk to recall anything about the evening. Unlike Chips Channon, or Harold Nicolson, or other keepers of namey journals and diaries, I do not leave my apartment often enough to compile a really interesting index—one of the kind that, under the letter *R*, for example, lists Walther Rathenau, Maurice Ravel, Max Reinhardt, Sir John Reith, Rilke, Rodin, and Ida Rubinstein.

"This afternoon Cocteau and Picasso suddenly entered my room and were just as suddenly gone again." That sentence, written by Count Harry Kessler, strikes me as precisely a sentence of the kind the keeper of a namey journal requires. In a single stroke it shows its author to be a man of the great world, as the German-born Harry Kessler, a cosmopolitan at home in art and politics and publishing, indubitably was. Kessler provides many such sentences: "In the afternoon visited Baby Goldschmidt-Rothschild. She received me in bed, between pink damask sheets and in blue pyjamas, the Chinese bed upholstered in yellow satin." "Maillol and Mlle Passavant lunch with me." "Luncheon at the Princess Bassiano's in Versailles with André Gide and others." "Sammy Fischer and his wife invited me to lunch with Gerhart Hauptmann." "Lunch with Albert Einstein, Nicolai, Rubakin, Sytin (the Russian publisher), and Hugo Simon to discuss Rubakin's people's library project." "Dinner at Martin du Gard's, with Helen, Paul Valéry, and Edmund Jaloux." One might think one could not hope to run so namey a journal on a low-calorie diet, yet Count Kessler was stiletto thin, thus rendering his diary, along with its being a splendid literary work, a simultaneous tribute to his energy and powers of abstinence.

If one cannot run a journal on meetings with famous people, for simple want of such meetings, then another possibility is to feature introspection and self-analysis. Introspection, even in a journal, has its limits. The diaries of Anaïs Nin, in which I have never been able to

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make much headway, seem to me subject to this criticism. She is too intent on "the quest for the self," as she more than once puts it, but after a page or two I invariably find myself giving her quest a rest. Even the higher introspection of Amiel soon loses it edge. Better, perhaps, to keep introspection where it belongs—to oneself.

In my own journal I tend to serve up introspection with a La Rochefoucauldian twist. "Vanity without foundation in either physical beauty or true talent is one of the most pathetic of human spectacles," I wrote on July 22, 1971, quite obviously referring to myself. "New bookcases," I wrote years later, "give one the splendid illusion that one can bring order to one's life." A week or so afterward I wrote: "I suppose I believe that art, like sex, is better for being made a bit difficult." And yet again, "Writing well is the best revenge," though what I had to revenge myself against is far from clear. This is La Rochefoucauld all right, but La Rochefoucauld, as I read it now, living well below what the old Department of Health, Education, and Welfare used to call the poverty level.

Sometimes my journal entries are little more than doodling in prose. In one such entry I describe what I call "a purist's dream," which is to write an entire essay in which no sentence begins with *it* or *there* and in which the words *but*, *yet*, *still*, and *however* never appear. Sometimes a single phrase will prompt me to repair to my journal, as when I describe a restaurant I had dined in the day before as the haunt "not merely of the old but of the militantly old," or when I refer to a greatly neurotic novelist of small talents I know as yet another case of "big wound, small bow." Like a precocious and rather spoiled child who runs off to his mother to report his smallest achievement, I run off to my journal to report my most fugitive thoughts. Five years into my career as a teacher, for example, I remark: "How, in its way, like courtship teaching can be, with the teacher as the male, the class a dumb but nonetheless desirable female who needs to be won each time afresh." Scraps of literary criticism go into my journal as well, so that, after finding myself disappointed with the closing chapters of *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, I wrote, "As secular autobiography tends to grow dull once success has been achieved, so in religious autobiography dullness sets in once the autobiographer has found God." I also mark my own birthdays: "I am 41 today. Apart from this flu, I have no strenuous complaints. I am required to do nothing ignominious to earn my living; everything ignominious I do, I do of my own volition."

I have by now filled nearly nine hundred pages with such matter. "Who," Igor Stravinsky used to remark when presented with a new work, "needs this?" I suppose I alone do. Something in me impels me to record much I have thought, or experienced, or read, or heard. "Most of life is so dull that there is nothing to be said about it," E. M. Forster wrote in *A Passage to India*. I could not disagree more. I find keeping a journal quickens life; it provides the double pleasure of first living life and then savoring it through the formation of sentences about it. Here I recall the cliché philosophical problem about whether a tree makes any noise falling in the forest if no one is there to hear it. As someone who keeps a journal, I prefer to keep a record of all the trees I hear fall, and by now I seem to have piled up, in my various notebooks, a great deal of lumber.

A journal can also function as the intellectual equivalent of a photo album or home movies. Reading through my journal, as I have been doing while writing this essay, I feel like a man watching a slide show that features himself. Why, there I am being turned down, at the age of twenty-six, for a job I then much wanted at a New York magazine. Here I am, in his office at the City University of New York, chatting intimately with Irving Howe, who was so kind to me when I was a young writer. Here I am again, pleased to receive a pleasant letter from Anthony Powell, a novelist I much admire, saying kind things about an essay of mine in the *TLS* and noting, in my journal, that such pleasure as my essay may have given him is "small quid for large quo." There I am marking the onset of boorishness in myself, at age thirty-nine, after a lunch with a young academic, about which I note that I have done most of the talking and said nothing that I have not said many times before. Here, there, everywhere, I am making firm resolutions I shall not come close to keeping—learning ancient Greek among them. And yet is this slide show any less boring than one given by a middle-aged suburban couple

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of their recent trip to Europe? I don't know, but I do know that, in my case, the host is having a swell time.

How is it that so many otherwise highly productive writers, in the midst of turning out novels, poems, essays, and criticism, have also found time to keep extensive journals or diaries? Ralph Waldo Emerson, Samuel Butler, Arnold Bennett, Theodore Dreiser, André Gide, Virginia Woolf, Evelyn Waugh, H. L. Mencken, and Edmund Wilson are but a handful of prominent names among such writers. One might have thought their already copious literary production would have been sufficient, but, no, they all needed to spill still more ink in notebooks, journals, and diaries. Having already used gallons of ink on their public thoughts, they poured out quarts more on their private ones. Enough, one would have thought, was enough—and yet for these writers it wasn't.

Are we talking here about the writer's disease known as graphomania? This is a disease that can take many forms. For some, graphomania takes the form of simply being unable to put the pen down—the authorly equivalent of logorrhea. For others—those, I should say, who have the disease in its advanced stage—it takes the form of needing to write everything down because anything that hasn't been written down isn't quite real. My guess is that Edmund Wilson had an advanced case. I know of no other explanation for the fact that Wilson felt the need, and acted upon it in his journals, to record his sexual congress with his own wife, which I find at once astonishing and repulsive (quotations on request—send self-addressed plain brown wrapper).

Were he alive today, Anthony Comstock, organizer and special agent for the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, could read my journal without missing a pulse beat. No future biographer, in the unlikely event that there is to be one, figures to find evidence in my journal for establishing the thesis that I am, say, a suppressed lesbian. And yet unsympathetic as I am to Edmund Wilson's chronicling of his conjugal sex life, as a journalist and something of a graphomaniac myself, I half understand his impulse to do so. It is the impulse to make one's days a matter of record—"no ink, no life," is the graphomaniac's slogan. Reading through my own journals I am sometimes amazed at how little in the way of stimulus I require to journalize:

> 5-2-78 a.m.
>
> Yesterday: wrote a few pages of my [Maxwell] Perkins essay. Translated my Yourcenar passage. Graded some student papers. Had a call from Cadmon records to write 750 words of album jacket copy for a record of Saul Bellow reading from *Herzog;* fee: $100 and some records. I chose not to do so.

Not exactly a day in the life of Ivan Denisovich, I grant you, but still I felt the need to record it.

On the other, larger hand, many are the private thoughts that a journalist can confide only to his journal. In *Samuel Butler's Notebooks,* which are mostly given over to general thoughts about art and life, there is an odd entry entitled "Myself at the William Rossettis." In it Butler records his ill feelings about Mrs. Rossetti's family, the Madox Browns, whom he used to visit but "who wanted me to climb my pole too much and too often before they would let me have [a bun], and it was not a good bun when it came. . . ." Nevertheless, when he is invited to visit, Butler pays his call and it is all rather a botch, even though he is on his good behavior. Before he leaves, though, Butler notes: "I had a few words with William Rossetti. I said how beautiful his pictures were; in reality I hated them, but I did all as I should, and it was accepted as about what I ought to have said." Here we have a fine example of the use of a journal as a personal corrective to what is deemed to be the world's necessary hypocrisy. Butler has gone through his paces, paid his false obeisances, but reports his true feelings in his notebook. Let the record show, then, that Samuel Butler found the Rossetti and Brown families a great pain in a soft place.

What record? you might ask. In Samuel Butler's case, of course, the record is the printed record, since his notebooks have been judged worthy of publication, in both complete and abridged form. Yet I believe that not only do few people keep a diary or journal for themselves alone, but most people who do keep a journal, even if they are not professional writers, at least half hope that theirs, too, will one day be published. Stranger things have happened. The great diarist Samuel Pepys, who earned his living as a naval administrator, wrote a diary that lay unpub-

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lished for some hundred and fifty-six years after he ceased keeping it; first published in abbreviated form in 1825, it has since been republished in various incomplete, bowdlerized, and complete forms time and again—most recently in a volume of a mere 1,096 pages entitled *The Shorter Pepys* (University of California Press). A very rich and rather unpleasant man named Arthur Inman made the maintenance of his diary his life's work and left enough money to Harvard University to make certain that it was published, as this autumn it has been. William Saroyan, a relentless diarist, left a good portion of his estate to the William Saroyan Foundation, which maintains his diaries and other papers. "In effect, he left his estate to himself," his son Aram Saroyan wrote. "He took it with him." The rest of us journalists and diarists have to trust to luck for posthumous publication of our journals and diaries; but my guess is that most of us are ready to do so.

While patiently awaiting the condition of posthumy, to be followed at a decent interval by posthumous publication, those of us who keep journals and diaries keep scribbling away. I note that in my own journal I once copied out an apposite line from Chamfort: "Quand M. de R——a passé une journée sans écrire, il repéte le mot de Titus: 'J'ai perdu un jour.'" Although I know exactly what M. de R——and Titus meant, I must confess that I do not write in my journal every day. On many days the world is too much with me and my life is too crowded even for a brief entry. I generally write in my journal in the early morning, before setting out to earn my livelihood. Sometimes I write down a paragraph or two after lunch, but I scarcely ever write in it at night, by which time, as an early rising man, I am usually drained of such mental powers as I possess. But when I do write something in my journal, I feel rather more complete, in the way I suspect an observant Moslem might feel for having done his ablutions. Not that journal writing elevates me—it doesn't, usually—but I do feel upon having made an entry in my journal as if I have done my duty, completed, in effect, an act of intellectual hygiene.

"I can no more recover one of my days in memory," wrote Amiel, "than a glass of water poured into a lake; it is not so much lost as melted away." I do not often look into my journals, yet whenever I do I am impressed by how much experience has slipped through the net of my memory. I note the name of a student in one of my classes whom I describe as "easily the most intelligent" I have come across during the then current academic year, whom I go on to describe physically, yet whom today, a mere seven years later, I cannot call to mind. I had quite forgotten having read a life of Voltaire by Jean Orieux, "a life that," as I recorded it in my journal, "in Orieux's telling, seems to have been made up of carefree fornication and witticisms, with a moment out here and there for writing." I completely forgot once describing a review I had to write of the book of a touchy acquaintance, an exercise I described as resembling "eating spaghetti while on a tightrope—and with chopsticks." At table on a Greek-owned ship on the Mediterranean, my journal reminds me, a companion at dinner, a tall, blonde, rather raffish woman, a producer for the BBC, announced "I then began to understand that the real interest in Yoga was the hope that one would develop body control enough to reverse one's ejaculations and levitate oneself"—an unforgettable bit of table talk, one might have thought, except that I seem to have forgotten it. I seem to have forgotten, too, that when a young intellectual, rather baldly on the make, stopped to visit me on a trip to the Middle West, I wrote in my journal: "I am for him an item (rather a minor one) on what I gather has been an extended tour of intellectual sight-seeing—on this tour I am the intellectual equivalent, perhaps, of Siena." That was in 1978; I was smarter then.

I suspect that anyone who keeps a journal has to be something of a Copernican—he really must believe that the world revolves around himself. All autobiographers are liars, Orwell once said; quite possibly all those who keep journals or diaries are convinced of their own importance. When a figure from the world of letters dies, for example, I feel it essential that I record it in my journal and offer my opinion of his worth. On August 8, 1980, I wrote:

> Kenneth Tynan died last week, at 53, of emphysema, in Los Angeles. He was not a writer I admired, but I generally read him with interest. He was the bright young man come down from Oxford, all marked out for success; but like so many such young men—beginning at least with Cyril Connolly—he did not quite come up to expectations. He

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was apparently a leftist of the decadent kind—for the people and for pornography, too. He had a pretty good role of the dice, I suppose, as theatre critic for *The Observer* and *The New Yorker* and Literary Manager of the National Theatre. . . . (Here I cite a piece of exotic gossip about him.) His, Tynan's, seems an agitated life; he is still now.

"Excuse me, buddy," I hear a voice with a strong Yiddish inflection inquire, "but who asked you should put in your two cents?" An interesting question, except that the person asking it clearly understands nothing about the impulse felt by the keeper of a journal, who is a man with a bottomless pocket of pennies and who, in his heart, feels that his, and not *The Times* of either New York or London, is the true journal of record. The phrase "a modest journalist," referring to anyone who keeps a journal, is an oxymoron. It may well be that no man is a hero to his valet, but neither is any man a pip-squeak to himself, and especially not the man—or woman—who keeps a journal.

As the journal of record—the record, specifically, of my own opinions and impressions—my own journal is not without a certain edge. Reading some of the things about contemporaries that I have written in it, I seem rather stronger in the line of cutting comment than I had thought. I am not so strong as the Brothers Goncourt are in their journal, but then I hadn't their opportunities. Paging through my journals I cannot miss a certain enthusiasm on my part for a well-turned insult. I see that I have described an English writer as "almost always wrong and frequently original"; a certain American intellectual as someone about whom I can never be certain if he is a man of principle or an opportunist, since his principles seem generally to run along the same track as his opportunities; another English writer, a man now in his seventies but still very much on the sexual attack, I have described as "a bent rake"; after attending a lecture by a famous but disappointingly dull scholar, I wrote that "I did not have to shield my eyes from the dazzle." And these comments, you understand, are all about people who have never done me the least harm; they are the result of sheer verbal exuberance, the rising thoughts of a journalist after a good night's sleep. Imagine, then, my journal entries about people whom I feel are my enemies. Vengeance, the Italians say, is a dish best served cold. My plan is to serve mine posthumously, which is to say, when I, the cook, am cold.

But who is to eat from this dish? The longer I live, the more I write in my journals and the lengthier they become, the less I can expect them ever to be published. My only hope is that standards continue to fall at the same splendidly alarming rate as they have been for some years now, so that I become a fit subject for a doctoral dissertation or a candidate for a book in an author series that has already exhausted such authors for the ages as Kurt Vonnegut and Philip Roth. Vengeance, then, I fear, will first be served not to my enemies but to some hapless graduate student or junior professor who will have to repair to bed bleary-eyed after reading the hundreds and hundreds of pages that I rose, dewey-eyed in the morning, to write in my journal. Perhaps an advance apology is in order. Sorry, fella, I had quantities of ink and a sturdy fountain pen and not all that much else to do but fill up all these notebooks. Nothing personal, which, if you will permit me to say so, is the way I hope (against hope, I realize) that you will write about my life.

After reading through my journals, what sort of man is this graduate student or professor likely to discover? Forgive me for saying so, but the man he finds there will not quite be me. He will find my literary opinions, many views on writing and writers, portraits, antipathies, criticism, invective, even sadness. He will, I believe, find a writer but not a man. I quote an entry from my journal on March 18, 1978 that reads: "Insofar as a journal is supposed to be the true record of a person's days, this one fails, for the main event of my life over the past five months or so has been the disintegration. . . ." and I then go on to mention, briefly, the breakdown of an essential relationship in my life. Again, my journal touches scarcely at all on my family life. Although she is often mentioned as being with me at this dinner or on that trip, my wife, who is the central figure in my life, is never talked about at any length in my journals, nor is my love for her discussed or analyzed, but then neither do I write about my appetite for oxygen. Lengthy though these journals of mine are, the most important truths of my life do not have much place in them.

At the same time, I would maintain that

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everything I have written in these journals is true—or at least as true as I could make it at the time I wrote it. Lying as such is not, I believe, a question in my journal: I do not claim to have met famous people I have not met; I do not deliberately falsify emotion to show what a bighearted fellow I am. Yet the truth of a journal of the kind I keep is truth of a proximate kind. Sometimes I discover, upon rereading, that I have simply not been smart enough, and thus have made judgments about other people that are inaccurate, or inept, or oddly askew. Sometimes I am too hard on people; sometimes I am not hard enough. Then there is the problem of self-deception. I do not think I brag in my journal, but neither do I specialize in modesty. I hope that the habit of self-mockery has helped me to elude the trap of self-inflation. I try, when writing in my journal, to keep in mind the twin truths that I am someone of the greatest importance to myself and that I am also ultimately insignificant. This is not always easily accomplished.

One of the reasons I think my journal is not too greatly marred by falsity is that in writing it I have had very little at stake. Unlike other journals, especially those of politicians, mine has almost nothing in it of the tone of self-exculpation. No reason it should have, since I have not been accused of anything more serious than having strong opinions with which some people have disagreed. As a writer, I do not feel in the least unappreciated; I feel very nicely appreciated—and quite lucky in this as in many other regards. I haven't, in sum, a case to make, but am instead a rather happy graphomaniac, a mere journalist with inky fingers and many blank notebooks and a taste for endlessly making distinctions and discriminations.

Harold Nicolson once remarked that a man should keep a diary or journal for the amusement of his great-grandson. I find that fellow rather difficult to imagine, let alone to write for. Although like every other man or woman who has kept a journal or diary I wish some portion of my journal will one day be published, just now it is being written for a good-natured and highly appreciative audience of one—me. Highly appreciative is quite accurate, for I tend to be partial to the younger man who wrote in my journal. (Will I like as much the middle-aged one who is writing in it now?) He could be gloomy, this young man, but he also understood that there was no point in letting his gloom get him down. He was forever imploring himself to work harder, and at one point he quotes a culture hero of his, Henry James, who, on the subjects of depression and work, wrote: "If only I can concentrate myself: this is the great lesson of life. . . . When I am really at work, I am happy, I feel strong, I see many opportunities ahead. It is the only thing that makes life endurable." After entering this quotation, my young journalist wrote: "Ah, those James boys!"

Sometimes I am astonished at the items that find their way into this journal of mine. On Tuesday morning, June 12, 1979, after noting that I had finished the first volume of a biography of Bernard Berenson, I also note the death of John Wayne. After remarking that, though I had no special reverence for him as an actor, as one of the larger-than-life movie stars of my youth, he had become, I wrote, "part of the furniture of one's life. The first half of one's life, it strikes me, one fills up one's rooms with such furniture; the second half one watches this furniture, piece by piece, being removed." My journal, in this connection, has served as a running inventory of my days, and I am pleased to have kept it. It has made life seem rather less the dream that I sometimes fear it may be.

"Life can only be understood backward," wrote Søren Kierkegaard, himself a journal-keeping man, "but we must live it forward." Too true—and a little sad. Yet a journal does provide backward understanding. Like the rewind button on a videocassette recorder, it is a great aid in replaying segments of past experience, in running over important and even trivial events, in recollecting moods and moments otherwise lost to memory. A journal is a simple device for blowing off steam, privately settling scores, clarifying thoughts, giving way to vanities, rectifying (if only to oneself) hypocrisies, and generally leaving an impression and record of your days. And when you are through with it, when the time has come to leave this mud pie, as my own journal recently reminded me that Mencken used to call the earth, you can even pass the damn thing along to your as yet unborn great-grandchildren. It is an extraordinary invention, better even than an American Express card, and I don't go anywhere without mine.

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Japanese Education

If They Can Do It, Should We?

THOMAS P. ROHLEN

THE LINE OF REASONING connecting education to economic performance is hardly a simple one, but lately it is frequently being mentioned as attention is drawn to our industrial competition with Japan. Her export prowess has quietly grown into a major challenge that is social and cultural as well as economic. This new competitiveness presents a major dilemma: either reform many of our basic institutions—such as savings patterns, management, industrial relations, and education—in an effort to adjust and reinvigorate our own system, or adopt a protectionist stance, step back from international free trade, and forfeit the growth and benefits it has brought. This dilemma is only spasmodically perceived at present, but the prospect is for growth in Asia to be twice as rapid as it will be in Europe and North America in the next decade, which indicates that the dominant historical trend of the next quarter century will probably be the rise of Industrial Asia. Time is not going to be charitable.

International economics is hardly the usual, and certainly not the most inspiring, context for a consideration of education. Obviously, taken to an extreme, it can have a depressing effect on the spirit of instruction and on the creation of human values in our schools. All the same, like it or not, international economics is a major influence on our society today and a major consideration behind the calls for educational reform. It provides a ground for broad consensus on the need to raise basic standards. Naturally, then, a great deal of interest has been focused on Japanese schooling in the last few years. Like Japan's manufacturing system and its industrial policy, her education has also become a "challenge," even a "model," for America.

II

Contemporary Japan is about as developed and organized a society as one can find in the world today. It is a society where educational cre-

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dentials and educated skills are central to employment, to promotion, and to social status in general. It is not a society with a privileged traditional class, nor is it one divided between a small, educated elite and the masses. Rather, the modern sectors of Japan's economy require the skilled participation of nearly all Japanese. Furthermore, Japan is a "meritocracy" shaped by an educational competition that enrolls nearly everyone. And this is fitting, for Japan is a nation that, lacking natural resources, must live by its wits, by social discipline, and by plain hard work.

It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that during the last twenty years Japan has quietly been establishing a new, higher set of educational standards for the world. On a whole raft of international tests of achievement in science and math, Japanese students outperform all others. Japan's newspaper readership level is the world's highest. A considerably larger percentage of Japanese (90 percent) than Americans (75 percent) or Europeans (mostly below 50 percent) finish the twelfth grade, and a greater proportion of males complete university B.A. degrees in Japan than in other countries. Japanese children attend school about fifty more days each year than American students, which means that, by high-school graduation, they have been in school somewhere between three and four more years than their American counterparts. Added to this is the fact that requirements in all basic subjects are heavier in Japan and that elementary-level education in art and music is universal and quite advanced. No one now denies that this is a most impressive portrait of national achievement. Japan has succeeded in holding very high standards for virtually its entire population, standards typical of elites in Western countries. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in many respects the upper half of Japan's graduating high-school students possess a level of knowledge and the analytic skills equivalent to the average American graduating from college. Until several years ago, we hardly noted these accomplishments, and the Japanese themselves never boasted of them but rather emphasized the costs incurred in achieving such success. One simple fact cannot be ignored: Japanese education to the college level has been made into an extraordinarily efficient engine for economic and social advancement. Japan's standards are becoming ours through the agency of free trade.

Consider the following sobering comparisons:

Total education expenditure as a percentage of GNP:	Japan	6%
	United States	7%
Four-year-olds attending school:	Japan	63%
	United States	32%

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Students graduating from twelfth grade:	Japan	90%
	United States	77%
Average daily hours of homework during high school:	Japan	2.0
	United States	.5
Daily absentee rate:	Japan	very low
	United States	9%
Years required of high-school mathematics:	Japan	3
(typical)	United States	1
Years required of foreign language (grades 7–12):	Japan	6
	United States	0–2
Engineering majors in undergraduate population:	Japan	20%
	United States	5%

What explains this level of accomplishment? In the background most certainly are such things as the long-standing respect for education held by the Japanese and the traditional view that diligence in school is a path to greatness. It is also true that Japanese society contains fewer social problems of the kind that make mass public education difficult. The country has few immigrants and few minorities. The divorce and unemployment rates are quite low. Drug problems are minimal, and juvenile delinquency is not as serious a problem as in this country. Such profound social differences raise the question of whether our schools and teachers might not produce results equal to Japan's if only they had the same kind of student population. In my opinion, the gap in results between the Japanese and American systems would shrink considerably. Acknowledging this, however, does not change the fact of Japan's challenge, nor does it remove from serious consideration the question of whether there is much to be learned from Japan's approach.

Another explanation for the success of Japanese schools centers on the firm hand of the national Ministry of Education in setting standards and curriculum for the country. Standards serve as foundations for the entire effort, and the standards applied are equivalent to those used for elite education in the United States and Europe. I will return to this topic when we consider what might be learned from Japan.

Very important, too, is the motivation that stems from the nation's very competitive university entrance exams. Pick up any of Japan's national newsmagazines in early spring, and you are certain to find the lead story to be about these examinations. For a brief time each year the ordeal of getting into college surpasses political scandals, international economic problems, and gossip about entertainers as the matter most interesting and important to the reading public. Imagine *Time* and *Newsweek* each publishing thirty or so pages of statistics documenting

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the secondary school origins of new entrants to hundreds of universities, along with details of the tests, competition ratios, and notable study techniques. All this attention (and anxiety) attests to the centrality of entrance examinations to Japanese society. Schooling is geared to it, jobs are based on it, and families are preoccupied with it. The obsession with entrance exams is like a dark engine powering the entire school system. High national standards and entrance exams combine with a great popular thirst for the benefits of education.

Economic prosperity has greatly bolstered the demand for education—and the level of competitiveness—beyond the imagination of Americans. Accession rates to Japanese high schools and universities have increased rapidly over the last quarter century. In 1950, only 43 percent of all fifteen-year-olds were going on to high school, whereas by 1975 the figure had risen to 93 percent. In 1950, only 7 percent of college-age Japanese enrolled in higher education; today more than 40 percent are going on to universities or junior colleges. The university population has swollen from about half a million in 1950 to nearly two million. Universities are clearly overcrowded, and the quality of education has suffered greatly. Only at the levels of higher and graduate education does our system stand out as comparatively strong.

Despite such problems, the ratio of candidates to openings at almost any Japanese university starts at 3 to 1 and rises to an average of 5 to 1. Many private universities attract eight or nine candidates per opening, and competition to gain entrance to departments that lead to degrees in medicine regularly reaches a ratio of 20 to 1. The national total of applicants, furthermore, annually exceeds the number of university openings by approximately 200,000. The competition has grown excessive.

Many who fail to enter the school of their choice decide to try again. They join a particular category of students who have graduated from high school but have not yet entered college. The main occupation of this group is cramming for the next annual round of entrance examinations. (As with the ancient Chinese exam system, there is no limit on how many times one may try and no age limit on applications.) Known as *rōnin* because they are akin to the wandering, disenfranchised warrior-heroes made familiar by samurai movies, these students are very largely male and usually academically talented. Attracted to the best universities, they prefer to persevere even for several years rather than to accept a place at a lesser university. Their lonely pursuit of fame and glory is often romanticized, but, in fact, it is a dreary, expensive existence. The annual *rōnin* population is estimated at 140,000 young people, and approximately one in every five male high-school graduates is fated to join this particular detour in the system. At the prestigious Tokyo University, roughly half of the successful applicants enter on the first

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try, one-third on the second, and 10 percent after three or more tries. Each year someone succeeds on his sixth or seventh attempt.

What kinds of examinations are involved? Composed almost entirely of multiple-choice and short-answer questions, the exams are designed to test (1) the comprehension of mathematical (high-school math goes beyond trigonometry) and scientific principles (physics, chemistry, biology, and earth sciences are required), and (2) the mastery of enormous bodies of factual material. Economics, geography, history (European, Japanese, Chinese, and United States), and English (six years) are required subjects. Every question has but one correct answer. Interpretive skills are not tested, but skills in math and science problem solving are important, and the degree of detailed knowledge required can be astounding. The level of factual knowledge necessary in the history sections of the exams for the best universities would tax American graduate students. In sum, the exams are of the kind for which a capacity to grind away for years in preparation makes a difference. Intelligence is quite necessary, but self-discipline and willpower are equally essential. Furthermore, only the exam results count toward admission. High-school grades, extracurricular activities, teachers' recommendations, and special talents play virtually no role, except in a very small percentage of experimental cases. It is hard to estimate just what percentage of all the energy expended is wasted on useless cramming, but it is consequential.

Nothing better illustrates the pressure to begin preparations early than the popularity of cram schools, or *juku*, which today enroll one in three middle-school students and one in four upper-elementary-school students across Japan. In Tokyo and other large cities, fully two-thirds of all seventh, eighth, and ninth graders are either attending cram schools or being tutored at home. *Juku* are privately run, after-school academies designed to supplement public education. There are *juku* for slow students, *juku* for average students, and *juku* for bright students, in part because the public system has no gifted programs, eschews tracking within schools, and offers no individually paced learning. The typical tutoring establishment involves instruction for a couple of hours a few days a week, but the more aggressive and fast-paced cram schools hold classes more regularly, even on weekends and during vacations. *Juku*, like tactical weapons in an escalating educational arms race, have become a booming growth industry complete with franchising and educational conglomerates. Private entrepreneurship, parental anxiety, and exam pressures combine to create an unprecedented phenomenon that critics feel threatens to make Japanese childhood nothing but a tightly scheduled existence shuttling from home to school to *juku*, with no time for friends or play.

Is the effort to enter a top university worth it? Clearly, the extraordi-

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nary thirst for educational success is based on the knowledge that good jobs and adult success hinge greatly on one's alma mater. What is crucial is getting in. In fact, most humanities and social science students, upon gaining entry to a university, take a one- or two-year holiday from serious study as a reward for completing the entrance exam ordeal. No one flunks out.

Just how dominant the top schools have been in supplying the country's managerial elite can be seen from a few notable statistics. Tokyo University, which accounts for less than 3 percent of all university graduates, alone produces nearly a quarter of the presidents of Japan's leading companies. The picture of elite dominance is even more pronounced in the upper level of the national bureaucracy, where Tokyo graduates have occupied the majority of jobs and nearly all the top positions during the last century. Much the same picture emerges from the nation's elected representatives. In the Lower House of the national Diet, one in four is a Tokyo graduate. The point should be clear that success on entrance exams is associated with career success, and ultimately with power and status. Even if it takes a few extra years as *rōnin* to finally enter a top school, the opportunities and ultimate rewards make the sacrifices worth the effort.

The powerful engine of exam preparation is fueled by this rather tight calibration between academic and career success. Those wishing to reform Japanese education realize that they must ease the tight relationship with employment before the exam system's hold will be weakened. Many privately fear, however, that without future employment as the driving motive of entrance exam competition, students, parents, and schools would slacken their efforts, and the present high standards in basic subjects would begin to fall.

Competition requires equal opportunity to be inclusive. Up to high school, the Japanese system offers a greater basic equality than American reformers have dreamed possible. This is accomplished primarily by a system of prefectural and national financing that equalizes salaries and facilities. Schools are not tracked by ability, and the number of private schools is small. At the point of high-school entrance, however, the separation of students by ability begins in earnest. High schools, like universities, are entered by examinations. This produces and perpetuates a system of school ranking that is more thorough than anything in American public education. The question of where the ablest students go, where the least able go, and all of the fine shadings in between can be recounted by any student or parent of the region, for each city or prefecture has a single totem pole. In a number of areas, private schools have risen to the top as a result of the greater latitude they enjoy in collecting the best students and gearing single-mindedly to success on

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the university exams, yet in most areas public schools remain very strong. Successful applicants to Tokyo University are now equally divided between public and private schools. After nine years of equal opportunity, the system is differentiated and competition produces an elaborate hierarchy. The system has the character of a true meritocracy.

The ranking of schools becomes a sensitive yardstick to measure the degree to which family background factors influence educational outcomes. My own studies reveal a trend toward a greater role for family factors in educational outcomes. Entrants to the elite national Japanese universities in the early sixties came from a broad cross section of the population with little relationship between income and success. Private universities (more expensive and easier to enter), on the other hand, were filled primarily by students from families in the upper half of the income scale. By the mid-1970s, a significant shift was perceptible, with fewer and fewer students from poor families entering the elite universities. A major reason, I think, is the rising significance of privately purchased advantages in the preparation process—namely, *juku* and elite private high schools.

I recently investigated five Kobe high schools chosen as representative of five distinct levels in that city's hierarchy of secondary schools. So that the reader can better appreciate the quality represented by each of the five schools, let me add that the private elite school I studied sends more than one hundred of its two hundred and fifty graduates to Tokyo University each year, whereas the second- and third-rank public academic high schools (each considered quite good locally) send but a handful of their students to any national university. Very few vocational school students go on to higher education at all. Dropout rates for the night school are about 25 percent. The results of my study indicate a number of very strong associations between school rank (and, therefore, academic achievement as measured by entrance exams) and a host of such family background factors as parents' education and occupation, the number of siblings, and family income. Family qualities may be influential from an early point in the child's schooling, but only with high-school entrance does the overt sorting take place. Japan, like the United States, has a school system that partially replicates the status and class system of its adults, but it does this without residential segregation.

Not only does the school system at the high-school level reflect differences of family backgrounds, but, by its very organization, it undoubtedly extends and elaborates these differences through the creation of distinct, stratified school sub-cultures. Delinquency rates, for example, correlate closely with the academic rank of high schools. Entrance exams thus serve something of an analogous function to residential segregation in the United States. Japanese cities remain

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residentially heterogeneous, but the competitive entrance-exam system and its parasite—the cram system—supersedes residential location (and thus housing expenditures) as the key to climbing the social ladder.

The issue of inequality between the sexes is also very interesting. Slightly more women than men now enter institutions of higher learning, but this is explained largely by the rapid growth of junior colleges whose enrollments are 90 percent female. The percentage of women enrolled in four-year universities did increase from 16.2 percent in 1965 to 21.2 percent in 1975, yet the fact remains that in higher education three of every five females are attending a junior college, whereas nine of every ten males in higher education are in four-year universities. Furthermore, in Japan's top universities the percentage of women has remained very small. Only about 6 percent of those accepted to Tokyo University are women. None of this, it must be emphasized, stems from overt discrimination in the admission process. The simple fact is that many fewer women apply. In 1975, only 17 percent of the women graduating from high school applied to universities, whereas 52 percent of the men applied. Only an understanding of the cultural attitudes prevalent in Japanese families can explain this pattern.

Let me summarize what I see to be the advantages and disadvantages in the above portrait. What distinguishes Japanese education is a very high average level of accomplishment. This seems to stem above all from diligence and organization, from an orderly single-mindedness, and an exceptional education "fever" centering on exams—the very same qualities that characterize Japanese industrial prowess. Initial equality and well-organized and well-supported schools are followed by a competitively determined sorting process that, by our standards, comes early. Preparing for exams creates a narrowness of focus in learning and emphasizes rote processes. The meritocratic process has few exceptions and offers too few second chances. It is tough to be a loser. As we might expect, education and society share some of the same deficiencies. To us Japan seems like an anthill, busy, well-organized, and competitive, but unable to foster individual expression or to support idiosyncratic or uncommon talents. Both society and education suffer from very rapid growth and from an obsessive preoccupation with success as measured by rather mechanical "output" standards. Their very efficiencies mask problems of unattended spiritual values and national identity.

III

What might we learn from this system, at once so impressive, so alien, and, for some, so ominous? First, many of the most fashionable ideas for reforming American education gain little support from the Japanese

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example. For example, much conservative attention is being given to putting an incentive system in place to measure, reward, and punish teachers according to performance criteria. The idea is a neo-classic utilitarian fix aimed at making the profession responsive to something akin to market factors. Voucher systems, now less in favor, reflect the same philosophy applied to schools rather than to teachers. Japan's arrangement, interestingly, rests on no such approach. Japanese teachers are not governed by an incentive system or exposed to the harsh realities of the marketplace. Rather, just the opposite is true. Japan is the home of "permanent employment." Teachers receive tenure with their first job, are paid almost entirely by seniority, and have no monetary incentive systems to upgrade their skills or to perform better in the classroom. Moral factors, social pressure, and the exam system are the forces working toward better teacher performance. For good or bad, this "escalator" approach is much more pronounced in education than in Japanese private industry, and many teachers admit that it is unfair to the young, to females (if they must lose seniority for family reasons), and especially to those who are contributing the most. But no one has seriously suggested to me that it be changed. The powerful teachers' union and the parallel employment system throughout the public sector make significant change virtually unthinkable. Our conventional wisdom has it that a powerful teachers' union would further cripple American education, yet Japan has succeeded with a deeply entrenched and politicized union, one that contests with the government all the time.

Japanese schools also run counter to many of the ideals espoused by our liberals. Their class sizes are very large compared to ours. Instruction is inevitably teacher-centered in Japan, and there is almost no self-paced work. Student choice is minimal. Discipline and group-oriented order are thoroughly established and strictly maintained. With high-school class size ranging from forty-four to fifty-five, this is a real necessity. Japanese teachers are sensitive to individual problems and differences, but they do not adjust classroom instruction to accommodate them. The notion that motivating students is the teacher's job, while discussed in philosophical terms, is definitely not at the heart of their instructional approach. Rather, it is assumed that schooling is an inevitability, like the weather, to which students must learn to adjust with the strong encouragement of their parents.

Nor is Japanese education structured as we would have it. Despite the reforms of the American Occupation, it is still highly centralized, notably in such key policy matters as standards, textbooks, finance, and higher education. Schools across the country are very similar; they respond to directional shifts of policy on the national level. Furthermore,

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instead of changing to comprehensive local high schools as the American reformers preferred, Japan's secondary system remained hierarchical and competitive. Thus, while the Occupation succeeded in reshaping Japanese education to foster much higher participation rates, it could not eliminate other features, ones contributing to the maintenance of high standards and intense competitiveness. In fact, the American democratic reforms, when combined with the surviving pre-war structural qualities, formed an educational pressure cooker of remarkable power. Three basic elements—entrance exams, high curricular standards, and the popularity of ambition—combined to lift the Japanese system into a very high orbit.

At the very points where our educational efforts relax, theirs intensify and vice versa. They put nearly their entire population through twelve tough years of basic training, and then many are allowed to coast at the university level, whereas we try to husband a very much more diverse population through a considerably less ambitious program that comes to near collapse at the high-school level, and then in higher education we take our better students and put them through a rigorous program. Graduate work in the U.S. is considerably more inclusive and developed than in Japan. What is the final result? Thanks to our universities, roughly the top 10 percent of American students are as good or better than their Japanese elite counterparts (with the exception that in science and engineering their numbers are relatively greater). The rest of our population, however, lags behind the Japanese. And the gap between the well-educated and the poorly educated is much greater in the U.S. than there. As a result, we have a society of greater class disparity and lower overall efficiency. Both educational systems have vibrant areas of talent, but Americans have greater problems in converting innovative ideas into large effective organizations.

Nor is money revealed to be a crucial issue. Japanese expenditure on education as a percentage of GNP has been a bit lower than ours, but both countries by international standards are relatively big spenders on public education. What is notable is the Japanese budgetary priorities. Their teachers are paid comparatively better. The school system operates on a twelve- rather than a nine-month working year, and this, in turn, puts teachers' pay comfortably within the middle-class range for people with a university education. The pay scale is sufficient to attract some graduates of elite universities, and its seniority-increase basis establishes a very low turnover rate for the profession. American budgets, on the other hand, have regularly built much finer school facilities than are found in Japan. They have also supported many more special educational programs (for the handicapped, the disadvantaged, the gifted, and others). One also finds many more ancillary staff positions

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in American schools, such as counselors and teachers of electives. Lately there has been considerable talk in this country about combining a longer school year with higher teacher salaries and a system of greater professional commitment from teachers. The Japanese case lends support for this approach. Low pay, long summer vacations, and teachers who come and go all suggest a situation in which our social and professional commitment is ambiguous.

Three very basic things, however, stand out as the "lessons" from Japan: national standards, early socialization to disciplined behavior, and earlier rewards for achievement. Each involves a rather complex translation process from the Japanese example to what could be effective American practice.

The Japanese Ministry of Education sets the standards for and approves all textbooks through twelfth grade. By this power it also governs the curriculum (but not the pedagogy) for all schools, private and public. By this mechanism it sets the goals and shapes the results of the educational process. The mixture of high national standards, exam competition, and the intensity of popular educational ambition provides Japan with all of the energy and focus it needs to achieve remarkable results. Obviously, the very thought of national educational standards in the United States is a political hot potato, and most certainly we will not accept federal government control over textbooks or curriculum. But, in a country that sets national standards for food and building products, for industrial safety and pollution, and for thousands of other categories (including pet food), it seems sensible and within the realm of political possibility to establish minimum national educational standards for eighth-grade and high-school graduation.

These standards would affect the lower quarter of our students. There is massive evidence illustrating how seriously we have failed this group. This failure is not by any means the responsibility of teachers alone. American society has failed to make a vigorous commitment to educational standards or to provide the means and incentives to achieve such standards. We go on encouraging immigration and allowing for less parental and individual responsibility as far as education is concerned, but we are not willing to acknowledge the consequence this has on our schools. Basic minimum standards become tools by which we as a nation could progressively raise the level of accomplishment for our slower learners. Also, because they would provide regular and inevitable discipline, national standards would help sustain the effort to bring our system in line with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Minimum national standards are hardly a panacea, or a substitute for good teaching, but they can assist the overall effort to improve our schools by regularly marking and focusing attention on the many

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problems currently hidden by our willingness to give diplomas without assuming the responsibility for what they represent. Who knows, perhaps eventually the minimum standards we set will not be embarrassingly low, as is now true in states where they are being tried. If we are serious about strengthening our educational system, we must not shrink from stating, clearly and unequivocally, what is not acceptable.

The second basic lesson from Japan has to do with teaching orderly behavior early in the child's school career. The basic point is the commonsensical one that all teaching and learning rests on a foundation of good student habits, especially orderly conduct and attention. The Japanese build such a foundation well at the beginning and maintain it carefully over time. Observers of Japanese early elementary school note that teachers make proper group behavior their highest priority, that they view their job as establishing proper habits for the entire subsequent school program. For this reason, they are ready to patiently drill their wards in the essentials of listening, queuing up, sitting still, being helpful, not disturbing others, and so forth. In elementary school, all students share in cleaning up their classrooms and school grounds on a daily basis. They learn not only to read music but to play two simple instruments, one wind and one keyboard. Playground time is supervised, as is lunchtime, by the teachers themselves. An awareness of proper order permeates the atmosphere.

Neither subject content, nor "kids will be kids" notions encouraging adult forbearance, nor individual differences are allowed to distract the teacher from this primary task. This is hardly a new or uniquely Japanese approach, but it is one that in the United States is too often honored in the breach. Our kindergartens and first and second grades are more confused, noisier, and periodically rowdier than their Japanese counterparts. At times I have thought the reasons lie in the hyperactive nature of our national culture, or possibly in the sugar-laced diet we feed our kids; but, while each of these ideas may contain some truth, there is also reason to think that our basic cultural ambivalence about order and freedom in education may be at fault. We often measure the vitality of a classroom by the degree of animation in evidence. Self-expression, excitement, and diversity are patently good things to us, making it hard for teachers to draw the line between order that is useful and order that is oppressive. Note how often individualism and creativity to us also mean tolerance of considerable group disorder. Add to this the true diversity of student abilities (given our population mix and such things as how idiosyncratically we learn to read), and American teachers have ample reason to underplay the kind of group socialization I am discussing. Unfortunately, this leaves instructors at the next higher grade level with the same problem of creating orderly behavior, but with a less

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pliant and responsive age group. The dissonance in our social system also stands out. Undoubtedly, family, peer society, and popular culture all contribute in their own ways to the degeneration of classroom order, but if we are to create a strategy to manage the problem within education the way it appears the Japanese have, we should begin with the very young and maintain the standards set in a coordinated manner over all the grade levels.

Third, I see the Japanese high-school entrance exam system, despite its narrow focus and obsessional tendencies, to be, on balance, a fundamental source of strength. The reason lies in the way it awakens early, in nearly all parents and students, a concern with educational performance. It does this by bringing the consequences of hard work closer than adult jobs. It does this for the entire population, unlike the way college ambitions work in the United States. Japanese high-school entrance exams allocate status and opportunities for all students; thus, they capture the complete attention of children in grades seven and eight. Kids know why they are studying hard and why success or failure is important.

Obviously, simply instituting entrance exams for high schools would accomplish little or nothing. Rather, for this approach to be significant, a geographical set of high schools would have to be differentiated—*qualitatively* by the level of academic preparation offered, and *substantively* with schools established to serve different occupational goals. We can make schools into rewards, just as our universities serve as rewards for secondary students who study. This will happen if they offer immediate higher status and lead to subsequent better futures. Students will work harder to get into them, if they are desirable and hard to enter, just as upper-class students now work hard to gain entrance into our competitive prep schools and universities.

Crucial to this plan would be the creation of attractive high schools that students have a desire to attend. To a small degree such an approach is exemplified in New York City by the Bronx High School of Science, the New York School of Performing Arts, and the aircraft technical high school, Academy of Aeronautics, located at La Guardia Airport. The crucial creative work for secondary-school leaders in our urban public school systems would be to develop a variety of vocational schools that are appealing to students who are not university-bound. What specific kinds of schools a city might create (for example, culinary arts, robotics, environmental, technological, office automation, or early childhood education) would depend on local conditions, just as the mix of academic and vocational schools would vary. The aim of diversifying and scaling down the size to generate a positive attraction among students would be the same. Such schools would use entrance exams as a screening device

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to establish and maintain quality levels and to give attendance status. The overall goal would be to generate a positive momentum in public education that motivates and inspires school work in the years before high school and that contributes to morale and school identification at the high-school level.

High-school entrance exams certainly raise the level of competition and add to anxiety about doing well. They also generate a school-based tracking system—all things that most American educators have eschewed as unconducive to proper learning. The fact remains, however, that pressure, discipline, and hard work have been a crucial part of the educational experience for our social elite, who are early on oriented to preparing for college entrance. The majority of our students, lacking that ambition, do not find the system demanding much of them. They are being tracked de facto without being challenged. We allow most of them to go through high school without a concrete sense of any occupational or educational goals to which they can readily identify. Some work for grades, of course (mostly those who are clear about college or career ambitions), but most students in our junior and senior high schools have a directionless sense of anomie because they cannot see where their effort is taking them. A system of school differentiation and competitive entrance would begin to extend to the majority a tangible environment of rewards for hard work.

Previous American reform proposals have concentrated on teachers or schools, with the goal of shifting them into a market context. The Japanese system centers the rewards and punishments clearly on students and parents. These are but three rather provocative ideas I have found in the Japanese case. At a more specific level, Japan and the United States have much to learn from each other in areas of curriculum design, pedagogy, and administration. The increased mutual interest now being stimulated by parallel efforts at re-examination and reform will undoubtedly be fruitful.

IV

What is most important to keep in mind is the undeniable fact that Japan is now setting the pace for primary and secondary education. Coupled to her economic strength (which will not go away and which is being reinforced by the general dynamism of Industrial Asia), Japan's educational achievements will be with us for quite a long time. Economic efficiency is not a very inspiring source of ideas for education, but in today's international environment it is a basic reality that will not be denied.

We would be foolish to see Japanese education as a model for our

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own efforts; but, as a mirror showing us our weaknesses and as a yardstick against which to measure our efforts, it has great value for us. We cannot allow ourselves either to ignore or to imitate its approach. Rather, it is possible to look periodically into the "Japanese mirror" while we quite independently set out to strengthen our schools and our system within our own cultural and social context. Japan's achievements should become the source of our ambitions and the measure of our progress. We shall need to use this mirror often in the years to come, if, as a society, we are going to keep abreast of the dominant historical trends of our time.

As Grammarians

EDWARD CASE

This life which is a sentence
Is also a declaration.
We make the sense of it
In our own terms.
As grammarians
We assert our meaning,
In what we decline,
In what we affirm,
In the conjugation of love,
In the predicates
And imperatives
And ambiguities
Of prosaic choice
We essay briefly
To define ourselves
Before the stop.

EDWARD CASE's work has appeared in various journals, including the *New Criterion*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Modern Age*. This poem was taken from a collection of recent work that he was preparing for publication at the time of his death last summer.

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The Letters

GAIL WHITE

Every week since freshman year
I wrote my mother. It was my one
and only claim to the status of Good Daughter
and she worked it—boasted of it
to her friends whose children only wrote
when funds were low or a new grandchild
was born. I was glad to do it.
It eased my conscience for the fact
that I'd rather write than visit.
And it was nice to know that some-
one cared about the new porch steps,
the acceptance from a magazine that
no one ever heard of, the quarrel with
the neighbors, the good tenant
who went into the monastery, the
death of the favorite cat. If
she had kept those letters I'd
have a diary of all my weeks, an
invaluable resource for
future biographers. Of course
she didn't. The attic would have
sagged with twenty years of boxes
full of letters. People just
don't save them anymore. And now
there's no one interested in those
new tires I got at discount rates,
the awful poetry reading, the cold
that seemed it would never end, the
good French wine. I sit and stare
at a sheet of paper in the typewriter.
It is not her I miss.
It is myself.

GAIL WHITE is poetry editor of the *Piedmont Literary Review*. Her poems and stories have appeared in numerous journals.

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Confessions of a Reluctant Yuppie

PETER BAIDA

I'M USUALLY A PLEASANT FELLOW, but I began to get grumpy as soon as I agreed to write about Yuppies. "All I'm going to do is show how muddled I am," I complained to my wife. "I've never liked anything anybody else has written about Yuppies, and I'm not going to like what I write."

We were sitting in our purple library. The walls are exactly the color of Matisse's favorite purple—the purple of the stripes in "Odalisque with Striped Dress." The library is our primary claim to fame among the dozen or so of our contemporaries (people in their early thirties) who play a role in what passes for our social life these days. We were the first people in our group to "do" our apartment. Two hundred feet of built-in bookshelves, track lighting, custom-designed cabinetry, and the fabulous purple walls—all at a cost that I would prefer not to make public, but, what the hell—all at a cost of forty-seven thousand, two hundred forty-nine dollars, and it would have been more if we hadn't cut corners.

"What do I know about Yuppies, anyway?" I said to my wife. Through the big window facing south, Manhattan glittered as if it did not realize that its glory days were over. One reason I'm not usually grumpy is that, when the day's work is done, it is very pleasant to sip bourbon in the purple library and watch the city glitter. The lit spire of the Chrysler Building soothes and gently excites me. Is there any place I would rather be? Is this not the good life, or at least one version of it?

"Why do you hate Yuppies?" my wife asked. Her question must have caught me off guard, for the ghost of Quentin Compson rose out of a corner of my mind that I had not visited since long before I got my M.B.A. All that I could reply, in an injured stutter, was, "I don't hate Yuppies! I don't! I don't! I don't!" I knew then that I was about to tackle an assignment that not even bourbon and our view of the Chrysler Building would make palatable. Writing about Yuppies was going to be, as the people of my generation used to say, a real bummer.

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In fact, I do not hate the young urban professionals, or Yuppies, whom I know. It's the ones that I don't know, the ones I read about in popular magazines and hear about on television, who bother me. A more pertinent question, then, might be, Why does *Newsweek* hate Yuppies? Here is a representative Yuppie couple, according to the *Newsweek* cover story of December 31, 1984, "The Year of the Yuppie":

> When Norman Sandler, 31, a White House correspondent for UPI, and his wife Raeanne, 29, an art director, aren't eating out, which they do at least three times a week, they experiment in the kitchen of their Washington, D.C., apartment. Filed meticulously behind the kitchen door are dozens of recipes, most of which call for special ingredients—all of which the Sandlers seem to have. . . . They've got Hungarian paprika, Masa flour, Cajun Country and homemade garam masala, ground sesame seed for hummus, Pomi strained crushed fresh tomatoes for sauces and wild rice sent to them from Minnesota. Jammed into cupboards alongside the Corning Ware and Revere Ware are garlic cellars, a tortilla press and Tiffany Bloody Mary mugs. In the refrigerator are a hot-pepper sauce brought back from Barbados plus five varieties of mustard including a London grainy and both "country" and "city" types of Grey Poupon; in the freezer, homemade pesto, tortillas brought back from California and a bottle of imported Polish vodka. Meanwhile, below the Burberry raincoats and Tiffany crystal in the front-hall closet is the overflow of their 180-bottle collection of wine and champagne. "I guess this is a substitute for children," says Raeanne as she lovingly fondles a prize Perrier Jouet.

Whom the Gods wish to destroy, they encourage to consent to be interviewed. Are we meant to consider the Sandlers an average Yuppie couple? Out of several million candidates, why did *Newsweek* choose them? How many young urban professionals did *Newsweek* interview before it found them? Is there anything that we ought to know about them that we cannot learn from an itemization of the contents of their kitchen?

It is worth pausing for a moment to consider how the portrait of the Sandlers differs from the portraits that would accompany a *Newsweek* cover story about the elderly, the poor, the disabled, the unemployed, or veterans of the Vietnam War. I have met aged idiots, blue-collar cretins, and veterans who fell short of being great guys, but I do not expect ever to read about them in *Newsweek* or any other mainstream magazine. Sympathy is cheap, and everyone enjoys a good cry. Generous treatment by the mass media is what we offer to the afflicted in lieu of the more expensive satisfactions that life has withheld. They may not have jobs, they may not have hope, but they have the good wishes of the editors of *Newsweek* and, indeed, of all the rest of us.

Yuppies, on the other hand, are fair game. Being a target is part of the price they pay for their success and—what is less forgivable—the

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apparently boundless enthusiasm with which they pursue success. In a story about Yuppies, the editors of *Newsweek* can take a kind of holiday. Attention must be paid, but it need not be sympathetic attention. The editors can let themselves go. They can shoot to kill:

> It was a year when . . . forty New Yorkers began working out at Definitions, a gym that caters to people who may *already belong to a health club*, but want to spend $600 a month in individual workouts designed to improve their most prized possessions, their bodies.
>
> They have rejected the suburban values of their parents in favor of living where the action is—even action as tepid by most standards as shopping for cheese and exchanging business cards at a cocktail party. How could a Yuppie live in the country, where there are no health clubs? Where would he run?
>
> "I'm totally infatuated with the world of real estate," she says. . . . But even real estate pales before the profits she imagines can come her way if she fulfills her fantasy, which is that someday she will be known as the woman who invented the Pet Rock of the 1990s.
>
> What Yuppies have discovered is nothing less than a new plane of consciousness, a state of Transcendental Acquisition. . . . They know that Beauty is Truth, and Truth is Beauty, which is why their most eloquent symbol is the Rolex watch, which has both.

The unstated message is that Yuppies are jerks. But are they—are we—really worse than previous generations? Has no one in America hustled for a buck before? Were there no corporation lawyers before, no business executives, no investment bankers, no stockbrokers? Did we invent affluence? Did we invent consumption?

I was pleased recently when *Esquire* declared that an article by a twenty-three-year-old writer named David Leavitt introduced a "hitherto invisible species of American, neither yuppie nor baby-boomer." What cheered me was the thought that with a new generation on hand—no, a new species!—perhaps my generation could enjoy a little invisibility. Let the new species have its day in the sun. Let *Esquire* devote whole issues to it. Let *Newsweek* list every item in the kitchen of one of its members. Others of my generation may feel differently, but I, a reluctant Yuppie, am ready to yield the spotlight.

The needs of our nation's journalists make it unlikely that any large group in our culture will remain invisible for long. The word *generation* in one of its meanings—a term of twenty-five to thirty years—now seems virtually obsolete. I feel sorry for the historian of the twenty-first century who struggles to grasp the exact distinction between "the Me Generation" of the late 1970s and the Yuppies of the early 1980s. But what is to be done? Space in newspapers and magazines needs to be filled; time on

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televison needs to be killed; and efforts to identify a new "generation" and, what is even more important, to pin an enduring label upon it, admirably serve these purposes.

I don't see much point in complaining that these labels are too simple. What use would anyone have for a label that was not too simple? Such phrases as "the Woodstock Generation" and "the Me Generation" are a kind of shorthand—too imprecise for our philosophers, perhaps, but good enough for any discourse of mine. I have a sense of what they mean, and I distrust anyone who claims not to. As Samuel Johnson, by kicking a rock, refuted Berkeley's proof that matter does not exist, so, by strolling down Second Avenue in New York City, do I refute the part of me that is tempted to deny the existence of Yuppies. If Yuppies do not exist, then who are these bouncy young women in business suits and running shoes? And who dines upon the tortellini salad and pasta with broccoli purée that are displayed in the windows of the gourmet carryout restaurants that I pass as I walk?

Newsweek dismisses as "facile" the notion that Yuppies "have merely resurrected the corporate-zombie culture of their fathers," but it seems to me that what is facile is *Newsweek*'s own argument, which rests upon a stereotype ("corporate-zombie") that comes straight out of a comic-book view of the business world. So far as I can tell, the college-educated business administrators of the 1980s are cut from the same cloth as the college-educated business administrators of all previous decades in this century. The current business best-seller, *In Search of Excellence*, with its peppy tone and its commonsense psychology ("We all think we're tops. We're exuberantly, wildly irrational about ourselves"), seems to me merely a contemporary version of Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* ("When dealing with people, let us remember we are not dealing with creatures of logic. We are dealing with creatures of emotion, creatures bristling with prejudices and motivated by pride and vanity"). Despite much talk about a "new breed" of corporate entrepreneurs, I know of no better source of insight about organizations and the people in them, whatever their age, than such well-known works of the Eisenhower era as David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man*, and Alan Harrington's *Life in the Crystal Palace*. As an economic phenomenon, Yuppies strike me as the latest incarnation of old news: generation after generation, the invisible hand of the marketplace supplies people to fill the roles that need to be filled.

One interesting way to put Yuppies into perspective is to compare their attitudes and enthusiasms with those of young urban professionals from other eras. In many ways, for instance, despite the air of genial

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benevolence that he cultivated as he aged, Benjamin Franklin can be viewed as an early Yuppie. True, Franklin rose from poverty, whereas Yuppies tend to be children of the middle and the upper-middle class. But in his *Autobiography*, in *Poor Richard's Almanack*, and in such works as "The Way to Wealth," "Advice to a Young Tradesman," and "Necessary Hints to Those That Would Be Rich," Franklin gave advice that many Yuppies now follow, whether they know it or not.

Even people who despise Yuppies admit that they work hard. In part, the willingness to work hard derives from the fact that many Yuppies are lawyers or management consultants who bill by the hour. In part, it derives from their desire to prove that they can withstand the punishment that is presumed to be the price of success. And, in part, it derives from the fear of being thought unimportant: if your peers are bragging about their sixty- or seventy-hour work weeks, then you do not want to admit that your job is so undemanding that you can get it done in a mere forty hours.

Franklin's aphorisms—published originally in *Poor Richard's Almanack* and then polished and republished in a single narrative entitled "The Way to Wealth"—include many that express Yuppie attitudes toward work: "Plough deep, while Sluggards sleep." "Dost thou love life, then do not Squander Time, for that's the Stuff Life is made of." "Since thou art not sure of a Minute, throw not away an Hour." Sometimes Yuppies are accused of working too hard, but here today's responses seem to be based upon a double standard: the willingness to work hard makes a man like Benjamin Franklin or Lee Iacocca a hero; it makes the overzealous Yuppie a nerd.

The energy that many young people devote to the cultivation and exploitation of professional connections—all the activities that contemporary self-help writers lump under the graceless umbrella of the term *networking*—is yet another link between Yuppies and Franklin. "Basically," *The Working Woman's Success Book* assures its readers, *networking* is "not a case of 'using' people for your own ends. It's exchange for *mutual* benefit, the trading of information, ideas, and favors." In his *Autobiography*, Franklin describes how, in 1727, four years after his arrival in Philadelphia as a penniless youth of seventeen, he "form'd most of my ingenious Acquaintance into a Club for mutual Improvement, which we call'd the Junto." Meetings of the Junto began with twenty-four "standing Queries," drafted by Franklin, which show that the trading of information, ideas, and favors was its main concern, though not its only one: " . . . (17) Is there any man whose friendship you want, and which the Junto, or any of them, can procure for you? . . . (19) Hath any man injured you, from whom it is in the power of the Junto

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to procure redress? (20) In what manner can the Junto, or any of them, assist you in any of your honourable designs? (21) Have you any weighty affairs in hand, in which you think the advice of the Junto may be of service?" *Newsweek* describes parties devoted to networking as a "unique Yuppie contribution to American culture," but anyone who has read Franklin must question that conclusion.

A third characteristic that makes Franklin seem an early Yuppie is his attention to appearances. In a famous passage in his autobiography, Franklin describes how he "took care not only to be in *Reality* industrious and frugal, but to avoid all *Appearances* to the Contrary." Today career counselors in business schools teach that success comes only to those who look successful. It is difficult to find a young man on the fast track who does not own a copy of John Molloy's *Dress for Success*. One of the supposedly representative Yuppies in the *Newsweek* cover story is a young woman who buys two new outfits each week and says in explanation, "The way you look is very important. Sometimes I think it is more important than what you can do."

In addition to Franklin's commitment to hard work, his passion for making business acquaintances, and his attention to appearances, an obsession with personal efficiency links him with the young professionals of the 1980s. According to Marissa Piesman and Marilee Hartley in *The Yuppie Handbook*, "A Yuppie most nearly approaches sainthood when he or she is able to accomplish more things in a single day than is humanly possible." By this measure Franklin was a saint most of the days of his life. Feeling that "*every Part of my Business should have its allotted Time*," he exhorted himself to "Lose no Time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary actions." A well-known passage in his autobiography is his "Scheme of Employment for the Twenty-Four Hours of a natural Day."

What conspicuously distinguishes Franklin's scheme of a day's employment from the "Day in the Life of a Yuppie" that Piesman and Hartley describe in *The Yuppie Handbook* is Franklin's inattention to consumption. No one has cited thrift as a Yuppie virtue, whereas Franklin was so enthusiastic a proponent of penny-pinching that the nation is still full of savings banks bearing his name: "If you would be wealthy, think of Saving as well as of Getting." "A fat Kitchen makes a lean Will." "Beware of little Expences; a small Leak will sink a great Ship." No doubt Franklin would have deplored the habits of consumption generally ascribed to Yuppies. But thrifty Yuppies would not be much fun to write about, and on this subject I suspect that the mass media have seen only what is most visible. If *Esquire* would like to introduce another hitherto invisible species of American, I suggest that the magazine look for young urban professionals who save a buck when

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they can, wear Timex rather than Rolex watches, prefer tuna salad to sushi, think a Sony Walkman looks silly, and do not expect ever to own a squash racquet, a Gucci briefcase, or a Cuisinart.

If the unstated message of the *Newsweek* cover story is that Yuppies are jerks, what attitudes and assumptions underlie that view? First, I think the hostility toward Yuppies derives from an assumption that the enthusiasm with which they pursue success is a sign of shallowness. The case, implicit in the *Newsweek* article, is stated explicitly in a famous comment by William James, which we almost never see quoted in its entirety: "The moral flabbiness born of the exclusive worship of the bitch-goddess SUCCESS. That—with the squalid cash interpretation put on the word success—is our national disease." The same view lies at the heart of most of the criticism hurled at Benjamin Franklin in the past two hundred years: "Not a word about nobility, not a word about honor, not a word about grandeur of soul, not a word about charity of mind!" Franklin, the literary historian Charles Angoff complains, lived a life of "fanatical practicality" that betrayed a complete "lack of interest in what are usually known as spiritual things." Yuppie careerism is presumed to exhibit the same lack of interest.

If Yuppie dedication to money-making arouses hostility, so does the extravagance of Yuppies as consumers. There is a general feeling among journalists (if not among restaurateurs and designers) that Yuppies demonstrate too eager and too expensive an interest in food, fashion, and furniture. On the subject of thrift, Yuppies cannot win. They are open to attack both from the pro-business perspective represented by Franklin and from the anti-business perspective represented by Thoreau ("When the farmer has got his house, it [may] be the house that has got him. . . . Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul").

A third strain of anti-Yuppie sentiment derives not from the fact of Yuppie spending but from the style of it. In matters of consumption, it is felt, Yuppies have not acquired the virtue of modesty. Or, to put the matter in a way that Benjamin Franklin might have approved, they have not acquired the *appearance* of that virtue. To care about consumption is one thing; to betray that one cares is quite another. The Yuppies profiled in *Newsweek* seem not to understand that by showing how much they care, they invite attack. This is another way of saying that they seem not to understand reverse snobbery. If they did, they would know that in a society whose only king is the Common Man, it is shrewder to boast about wearing a Timex watch than it is to wear a Rolex.

Finally, Yuppies are often accused of having no "social values." The accusation has a useful vagueness. It sounds as if it means something, and not having "social values" sounds awful, like not having common

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sense, not having a sense of humor, or not respecting one's elders. What the accusation really means, I suspect, is that Yuppies are young, and they make the speaker feel old, and thus they remind the speaker of the nasty social fact that youth displaces age. In response to the nasty fact, the speaker lambastes the barbarians. It is not self-evident, I might add, that people who claim to be guided by "social values" contribute any more to the general good than people who cheerfully pursue their private concerns. As Adam Smith observed long ago, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest."

It would be a mistake to suppose that the attitudes underlying anti-Yuppie sentiment are limited to intellectuals. I think that there are many young professionals today whose conversations with themselves go something like this, though in language more contemporary:

> Thirty-three and an income of $50,000 per annum! . . . Beyond this never earn. . . . Cast aside business forever. . . . Man must have an idol—the amassing of wealth is one of the worst species of idolatry—no idol more debasing than the worship of money. . . . To continue much longer overwhelmed by business cares and with most of my thoughts wholly upon the way to make more money in the shortest time, must degrade me beyond hope of permanent recovery. I will resign business at thirty-five.

These thoughts of a disaffected businessman are from Andrew Carnegie, who was writing in 1868. If *Esquire* would like to introduce yet one more hitherto invisible species, I propose that it run a story about young professionals who share Carnegie's reservations and his dream of escape.

Thinking about the Yuppies I know, I find myself recalling the chapter in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* entitled "Why There Are So Many Men of Ambition in the United States But So Few Lofty Ambitions." "Every American is eaten up with longing to rise," Tocqueville observed, "but hardly any of them seem to entertain very great hopes or to aim very high. . . . They are much more in love with success than with glory." Democratic society, he concluded, has "less to fear from boldness than from paltriness of aim." Today, the important division among Yuppies seems to me to be the division between those who have settled for lives as well-to-do professionals and those who never aspired to anything else. This is the dimension that I miss in the portraits in *Newsweek*. The people I know—well, here are fifty of them squeezed into three brief portraits.

K. was a classmate of mine at Harvard, class of '72. K., at age twenty, thought law, medicine, and business to be refuges of the second-

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rate. Intellectual work appealed to him, but academic life also seemed a refuge, and he doubted that he could do work that mattered (the only work that seemed to him to matter was work on the level of Marx, Freud, or Weber). After three months as a clerk at a bookstore in Cambridge, two years as a teacher of history at a high school in Roxbury, two years as a community organizer in Georgia, and three years as a reporter on a small newspaper in Delaware, K. was bored with himself and bored with his prospects. His wife was a painter who earned no money. K. himself found that, though he did not care about money, he spent nearly all his time thinking about it. He applied to law school, was admitted to Yale on the strength of spectacular board scores, earned his usual spectacular grades, and in the fall of 1982 moved to Manhattan to take a job with a corporation in the Fortune 500. His wife has begun to take business courses at N.Y.U. Their children attend a private school.

K.'s youngest sister, S., entered Radcliffe in 1974, two years after he graduated. Whereas K. had majored in American history and literature and had written a thesis about Big Bill Haywood, S. majored in economics and wrote a thesis about tax policy. Whereas K. had taken part in passionate late-night discussions aimed at formulating strategies to foment revolution in the United States, S. took part in discussions aimed at formulating strategies to get into law or business school. Whereas K. read Lenin in his spare time, S. read Milton Friedman. Now she reads *Savvy* and *Manhattan, inc.*; K. reads the *New Republic*.

S. read a bit of Freud in college, but she did not waste any time on Marx or Weber. She thought of herself as smart but not intellectual; and, though she might have agreed with her brother in viewing the professions as a refuge for the second-rate, that view only reinforced her sense that they were good enough for her. She worked hard, earned good grades, went directly to law school, and started with a firm in New York at the same time as her brother, at a salary that exceeded his by five thousand dollars. She does not think of herself as a person who cares about physical fitness, but she jogs every morning and plays squash at least twice a week.

Another classmate of mine, Q., emerged from college with a degree in English, a fellowship that freed him to do whatever he pleased for a year, and the ambition of becoming a novelist. Like everyone who is passionate about literature, Q. thought of the professions as a place for people who preferred not to make large demands upon themselves. His twenties were not happy. The desire to write a novel that would make him famous gave way to the desire to get a short story into the *New Yorker*, which in turn gave way to the desire to review a book for the *New York Times Book Review*. At thirty, having fulfilled none of these ambitions, he went to work for a popular weekly newsmagazine. Though

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he is pleased to have landed this job, little else seems to please him. He does not have much respect for himself or for the bright young journalists with whom he works or for bright young professionals in other fields.

If half-a-dozen young men and women like Q. were asked to write about Yuppies, what tone would they take? No doubt they would take exactly the tone conveyed in the *Newsweek* cover story. The whole story is clever, with an undercurrent of contempt. I can understand the appeal of that tone. But what is the point?

Consider the conclusion of the *Newsweek* article:

> Yuppies may soon start abandoning their tony lofts and brownstone warrens for the very place they have spent the last two decades escaping: the suburbs. . . . You can visualize it now, can't you? Real estate values on Long Island will skyrocket, as Manhattan's trendy masses rush once again to be where the action is. . . . They'll build brick barbecues as big as houses and sizzle steaks as big as hubcaps. Every so often they will sit back on their patios with a nice highball, and think back to those crazy '80s, and wonder: what really was the big deal about Brie, anyway?

Very clever. In fact, I can't think of any wittier way to end, so let me close with a little story. A couple of years ago, before we redecorated our apartment, my wife and I gave what might be called a Yuppie dinner party. All six of our guests were young professionals with degrees in law or business from top-ranked schools. At one point I mentioned that my wife recently had finished reading Proust and that now I had begun. "Who is Proust?" one of our guests asked. I thought that someone else would answer, but all eyes turned toward me. Suddenly I realized that not one of our guests knew who Proust was.

If I worked for *Newsweek*, I suppose I would know how to make this story amusing. But it does not amuse me, and, though I'm generally delighted to seize any excuse to think well of myself, the incident does not make me feel smug or superior. It makes me feel sad. Now, recalling that moment, I turn to contemplate the Chrysler Building. It's past midnight, and I've got to catch an early flight for a meeting in Richmond tomorrow. I still drink bourbon, but I've switched to a more expensive brand. Thank goodness, I think as I gaze at the lit city, that I don't write essays for a living. If my income depended on my writings, I never would have built my purple library. I was right to go to business school. And, I finally know the answer to the question my wife asked when I started this essay. I don't hate Yuppies. They—we—make me sad.

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Ike and I

A Personal Remembrance

KENNETH S. DAVIS

ON THE AFTERNOON of Friday, February 1, 1946, I rode a train down to Washington from New York City, where I was a lowly instructor in journalism at New York University, to visit next day with General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had recently taken over as U.S. Army Chief of Staff. Three months before, Doubleday had published a book of mine about the general, a full-length biography, and the main purpose of my trip was to obtain the general's personal reactions to what the book said about the Eisenhower family, about him, and about his command operations during the great war just ended. He was, I would discover, well prepared.

I

My book, I should explain, though written with the clear understanding that my freedom of expression would be untrammeled, had been in considerable degree an Eisenhower family project. The initiating agent had been the general's youngest brother, Milton. After a brilliant career as a top administrator in Washington's federal bureaucracy, during which he had made a national reputation a full decade before Dwight was heard of by the general public, Milton Eisenhower in 1943 became president of Kansas State College (now Kansas State University), his alma mater, and mine. I had returned in the summer of that year to live and write in Manhattan, Kansas, my boyhood home and the home of Kansas State—a fact that enabled me to see and hear Milton deliver his inaugural address as college president. I was immensely impressed by what he said and by the man himself. I was therefore immensely pleased and flattered when he let me know that *he* was impressed by a novel I'd written (a first novel, published by Houghton Mifflin the year before) and he wondered if I might be willing to team up with him on some special projects. Soon we were friends and I was doing writing chores for him—a speech, an article or so, and answers to requests for information

KENNETH S. DAVIS's latest book, *FDR: The New York Years, 1928–1933*, the second volume of a four-volume history, will be published in the fall of 1986.

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about the Eisenhowers of Abilene, which then poured in upon him from newspapers, magazines, authors. Several book publishers asked him to write a book about his brother, requests he referred to me, after flatly refusing to do such a book himself. The upshot was that, in early 1944, I abandoned for the time being a second novel I'd been struggling to complete before being drafted, and signed instead a contract with Doubleday to write a biography of the general.

I did so with great trepidation. I was young, inexperienced, and only too acutely aware that the enterprise on which I embarked was hazardous for any writer seeking recognition for seriousness and honesty of purpose. Circumstances virtually compelled an admiring portrait of the Kansas boy who grew up to become supreme commander. What if I found myself unable to draw one honestly? Or, having drawn one, what if it was later falsified by my subject's revealing, under pressure, character traits that were unexpressed or unimportant in his present job? Dwight D. Eisenhower was, after all, still in the midst of a very active life. But the possible rewards, joined with patriotic impulse, outweighed the hazards—especially since Milton promised me full, if necessarily covert, cooperation in the project.

He abundantly fulfilled his promise. He smoothed the way for me with introductions, enabling me to see and interview in-depth all of his brothers, his mother (senile, alas), his aunt and uncle, family friends, cadet John Eisenhower at West Point, Mamie in Washington, and others. He provided me with family documents and with a full oral account of his own experience of Dwight, his own judgments of him. Most important, he wrote to Ike overseas and had me personally accepted as a war correspondent assigned to the supreme commander's personal headquarters—this before either my publisher or I had applied for correspondent status. I became, I think, the only war correspondent representing a book publisher in the whole of the European theater.

Before I went overseas I had in hand a mass of information about the Eisenhower family and Ike's own career, and I also had what proved to be a substantially valid conception of my biographical subject and of the story I had to tell. I had even written a considerable chunk of the book, dealing with the family and social background from which the boy Ike had emerged. "The family history fascinates me," I wrote my agent at that time. "In part it's a history of the development of that peculiarly American democratic strategy, the strategy of the relaxed will, of controlled drift, of creative compromise. These guys never strive to make the world over in their own image, or even to impose their own will very much on the stream of events. They are remarkably free of the illusion that they are destinies. They are much more typically American than the willful flamboyant types, like MacArthur."

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There was thematic significance, I thought, in the fact that Dwight Eisenhower had grown up within a few miles of the exact geographic center of the United States; and that the Kansas of his formative years was a peculiar balance of opposing cultural traditions, as befitted a state poised halfway between every pair of national geographical extremes. A crusading puritanism had been introduced into eastern Kansas by immigrant New Englanders in the days of "Bleeding Kansas"; it had been sustained by such religious colonies as the Mennonite River Brethren, whose immigration from Pennsylvania had brought the Eisenhowers to Dickinson County in the 1870s; and it continued to manifest itself in a disposition to legislate the private morality of citizens. But western Kansas, a high, flat tableland of little rain, accepted to a degree the cavalier traditions of the Old South—a combative "code of honor," an emphasis upon the skillful handling of horses and weapons, an insistence upon untrammeled personal liberty—as these developed in the gambling "rugged individualism" of cattlemen, wheat farmers, and oilmen.

In Abilene, during the years of Eisenhower's youth, the opposing traditions were mingled in approximately equal proportions. The town still retained some of the flavor and, among its boys especially, many of the vital attitudes of its wild cow-town past. The boys played cowboys and Indians as a favorite game while in grade school (Ike's favorite recreational reading when I was with him overseas continued to be Western pulp magazines; he had them shipped to him by the bale); and the boys' fistfights, in several of which Ike was a principal, were of a ferocity almost incredible to a later generation. But Abilene was also a town of churches, and in the Eisenhower family home—a white, two-story frame house at the southeastern edge of town, where eighty-year-old Mother Eisenhower still lived in the summer of 1943 (his father had died in March)—all pride of combat, bred by lawless violence, was opposed by a deeply religious pacifism. As a matter of fact, both the Eisenhower parents became Jehovah's Witnesses. They insisted that each of their sons be self-reliant and self-sufficient; they made no effort to dictate careers to them, but they could not hide their disappointment and hurt when young Dwight Eisenhower announced his decision to try for a service academy appointment. When Ike won his West Point appointment, his mother went upstairs to her room and wept.

It might be expected that the professional soldier who came out of such an environment would retain a "civilian mind," that there would be in him a balanced tension of frontier pragmatism and religious idealism, and that he would have, so to speak, a psychology of "middleness" and "togetherness." There would have been encouraged in him a tendency to seek always for common denominators among diverse people and

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things and forces, then to employ these for the achievement of coalitions, amalgamations, homogenizations. This of course was required for Eisenhower's success in his great new assignment. The very essence of his task was the discovery and cultivation of "middle grounds," where creative compromises might grow out of initial oppositions.

Another fact about Abilene, the Abilene of the early 1900s, is worth stressing. The town somehow encouraged in the boys who grew up there during the first three decades of this century an abnormally great and potent success anxiety—a passion for "getting ahead"—with *success* defined exclusively in external, materialistic terms. It is astonishing how high a percentage of the two or three hundred Abilene boys of Ike's generation achieved this kind of success—as bank executives, utilities executives, merchants, agri-businessmen. Thus, of the six Eisenhower sons, Arthur, the eldest, became executive vice-president of one of the largest banks in the Middle West, in Kansas City; Edgar, the next oldest, became a very prosperous corporation lawyer in Tacoma, Washington; Roy, a couple of years younger than Ike, became one of the leading businessmen of the Kansas town of Junction City; Earl, perhaps the least obviously successful until the 1940s, nevertheless did very well as an electrical engineer and (as I remember it) owned a radio station in Illinois when he died. And the young Ike, though openly manifesting remarkably little success anxiety during his first years in the army, kept a shrewd eye out for the main chance and took full advantage of it after he had been convinced by General Fox Conner, during a tour of duty in Panama, that another world war was inevitable and that he, Ike, had the stuff for high command if he prepared himself properly.

For instance (and an important instance in Ike's career), he was asked in late 1926 if he would be interested in being assigned to the American Battle Monuments Commission in Washington to prepare a guidebook to the American battlefields of Europe. It was a writing assignment, not attractive to most officers. But the work would be done under the appraising eye of General John J. Pershing, chairman of the commission, and Ike promptly accepted. He did a grand job, with some help from Milton, producing in 1927 a guidebook on historical principles that remains an excellent reference work on World War I. And Pershing, who had major clout in the army, of course, became Ike's enthusiastic supporter.

II

I went overseas in the summer of 1944, a month after Normandy D-Day. The supreme commander was still headquartered in England, and I first interviewed him in his office at Wide Wing, an air base in a

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village just outside London. Actually we talked, that first time, not in his office but in an adjacent surface air-raid shelter, for just as we shook hands there was an air-raid alert—a V-1, or "buzz bomb," was approaching—and he told me that, since he had issued orders for all hands to take cover during alerts, he himself must do the same. He welcomed me as Milton's friend and told his three aides to facilitate my seeing all the top people at SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force), which they did. I found myself at once accepted as a member of his very small and close official family, had lengthy interviews with all of them, including his chauffeur Kay Summersby, who, I vividly remember, told me one afternoon, quite emotionally, of her great love for a British officer who had been killed in North Africa months before she first saw Eisenhower. One day, a Sunday as I remember it, when Ike was away somewhere, Navy Captain Harry C. Butcher, Ike's principal aide and boon companion in those years, took me down to Telegraph Cottage, which was then Ike's secret hideaway. We spent a long afternoon there, intending to be driven back to London in the evening, but we had such a good time, and I was getting such marvelous stuff from Butch for my book, that we decided to stay the night. I was reminded of this by a clipping I found when, to refresh my memory for this article, I looked over documents long stored in my attic. In a letter to my editor, Lee Barker, I mentioned that, having no night things with me, I had spent a night at Telegraph Cottage sleeping in Ike's pajamas and in Ike's bed. Lee was evidently so impressed by the closeness of my approach to my biographical subject that he fed the item to a prominent gossip columnist of those years, Leonard Lyon.

When Ike transferred his personal headquarters from England to a small tent camp in an apple orchard halfway between Bayeux and Saint-Lô in Normandy, I was one of his small party, and we lived there for several weeks, becoming quite intimately acquainted with one another. I had lengthy interviews with Generals Bradley and Patton in their respective field headquarters, but was warned away from any attempt to see Field Marshall Montgomery who, everyone told me, including the top British officers at SHAEF, was "difficult" and, as a source of the kind of information I needed, unprofitable. With Ike himself, my most memorable interview was on an afternoon when he was nursing a knee he had wrenched while hopping out of an airplane. We spent hours alone together during which he gave me much valuable information about his theory of command, the strengths and weaknesses, as he saw them, of various field commanders, his view of his own historic role, and about the notorious Darlan Deal in Algiers and the Patton soldier-slapping incident in Sicily.

Perhaps I should explain the Darlan Deal. French Admiral Jean-

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François Darlan was a 100-percent Nazi collaborator who, with Pierre Laval, was one of the two most powerful men in Vichy France under the aged figurehead of state, Marshal Pétain. By accident or design, Darlan was in Algiers when Anglo-American forces landed in North Africa, and as commander in chief of Vichy's armed forces, including the powerful French fleet immobilized at Toulon, he was assumed by Eisenhower, upon the advice of U.S. diplomat Robert Murphy, to be able effectively to order the French military not to resist the British and Americans. On this highly dubious assumption, Eisenhower approved a formal agreement with Darlan whereby the admiral assumed governmental authority over French North Africa "in the name of the Marshal" and under the existent Vichy laws and administrative arrangements, which included concentration camps for political prisoners and anti-Semitic ordinances. Darlan then issued the desired order. French military existence ceased. But was there any important causal connection between the two events? Eisenhower, who justified this deal solely on the grounds of "military expediency," insisted that there was. I was among a great many in the U.S. and Britain who saw things differently, and who would have continued to be outraged by the deal even if its presumed causal efficacy were proved true. Was this bloody war against Nazi-Fascist tyranny to end in a similar deal with Hitler and Mussolini?

It is a measure of Ike's frank friendliness on this sunny afternoon in Normandy that I dared express to him my conviction that the Darlan Deal had been a grievous error and that Darlan's assassination on Christmas Eve of 1941 had been fortunate for the Allied cause and Ike's continued effectiveness. This elicited from him a spirited defense of what he had done—a defense that seemed to me highly revelatory of his sense of relative values.

By the time I flew back to London, in early autumn, I had masses of notes and an enormous admiration and personal liking for Ike, as a man and as supreme commander. But it was not a wholly uncritical admiration. Shortly after my return to London, where I worked hard at the writing of my book while buzz bombs and the first V-2's came in, a friend of mine who was in the Office of War Information (OWI) asked me to give a talk about the supreme commander to his staff in the American embassy. As I reviewed my notes for this talk, and as I later wrote in the conclusion of my book, I was struck by the fact that I had held two distinct and contradictory attitudes toward Eisenhower.

Written in a moment of despair, one of the notes said: "It is almost impossible to write a biography of any depth, any significant density, when its subject is a man who has no interior life. Eisenhower . . . is a man whose whole mental life is involved in *external* strategy. If he cares about *meanings*, even historical ones, I am not aware of it. . . . Yet he is

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caught up in historic circumstances. In writing about him one is impelled to carry meanings to him. . . ." Another note said: "Meaning, significance, is not rooted in him; it only *adheres* to him. His significance is all external, imposed. He drifts with a destiny he probably does not understand, and he does nothing (practically) to determine it." Still another note said: "He is in a heroic position without being himself a hero. None of that moody grandeur, depth, et cetera, which inspires men to be better than themselves. One can't imagine him leading a great historic movement. No *creative* will. There is no *beyondness* in him."

There followed a series of transitional notes through which, obviously, I had tried to work my way to a more positive attitude toward my subject. "Don't try so hard to understand him," said one of them, "or you'll falsify the portrait by forcing its subject into preconceived molds. Be passive. Passivity need not be negative. You have to accept before you can criticize and reject. Let him work on you. Stick to facts, as he does." Said another note: "Eisenhower is a mirror of democracy. Use Sidney Hook's neat distinction between 'eventful' and 'event-making' men. Ike mirrors events, colors them with his personality, but never (in the deep sense) *causes* them. . . . But that's absurd. To color such mighty events as these is in itself a creative act. Moreover, SHAEF is perhaps the greatest fact of this war and SHAEF is certainly Ike's creature. . . . History may yet write Eisenhower's special qualities down as determining forces in the world stream. Must avoid the intellectual fallacy—belief that if a thing is simple it is without significance, or if obvious, without truth."

The final notes were all affirmative in tone. They followed thousands of words recording my interviews and observations in France—and the admiration these final notes expressed was wholehearted. Said one of them: "Do not his vital attitudes constitute a psychological base for world-wide cooperation? Gradualism, tolerance, etc. 'The world moves forward in little steps,' as he says. Are not these attitudes possible to all mankind? Cannot they become commonly operative, part of a world-wide common mind?" Another note proclaimed that "in a world of such vast destructive forces, a world of such close-knit interdependencies, egotism is more than a mistake—it's a crime. That's one thing one learns from Eisenhower." Yet another note said that "history is a by-product of ordinary workaday effort, and you have to stand a long way back from Eisenhower to realize what an immense and truly creative job he's done in a situation where, one would have thought, only vast killing and destruction were possible." It was on this note that I based my little talk to the OWI people, and I caught from my listeners a glow of enthusiasm for my subject that helped sustain me through the remainder of my long and arduous writing task.

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A few weeks later I was back in Manhattan, Kansas, where I wrote the bulk of the book during the next ten months or so. The proximity of Milton Eisenhower—the fact that I could check things with him and that he and his wife Helen were eager to read the manuscript—was of enormous help to me. Recently when I had to prepare a paper for presentation at a Boston College symposium on American presidents, my wife found in old files stored in our attic some twenty-odd pages of single-spaced typewritten notes by Milton, commenting on every phase and detail of what I'd written, correcting factual errors and judging my interpretations and conclusions. Not a few of these comments were critical. But his overall assessment was gratifying: "I am satisfied that you have produced a great book, one which will establish you as a significant American writer."

III

I called the book *Soldier of Democracy*. It was published in November 1945 and had a considerable success, both critically and commercially. It at once appeared on best-seller lists and stayed there, in the top five much of the time, for many weeks. The success was almost as gratifying to Milton as to me. He had really stuck his neck out on this project, had risked acrimonious censure from the family—and, indeed, he got some from Mamie, who, when I sent her the galley proofs to review, vehemently demanded a removal from the book of all mention of Kay Summersby. ("I don't even want her in the index," I remember Mamie saying to me, during a phone call from Washington to New York.)

Ike, too, was pleased, as he made clear to me when I talked with him in the Pentagon on Saturday morning, February 2, 1946. He asked me to come out to his historic house in Fort Myer, and he and I spent the whole of a long afternoon alone there. For me it was a vividly memorable afternoon. I had brought with me a copy of my book, hoping he would inscribe it, and he promptly did at some length, expressing personal gratitude for the way in which I had portrayed the Eisenhower family "as it was and is." He'd read the book with care. He had written out at least a page of notes on it, had also made extensive marginal notations on his copy, and we went over these in an animated and, for me, exhilarating conversation, during which he commented fully and freely on the command problems discussed and on the personalities portrayed. He continued to object strongly, of course, to my views on the need for and consequences of the Darlan Deal, but this disagreement was as friendly as it was frank, and it was offset by his approval of other things in the book, especially the character portrayals of his family, of the people on his immediate staff in Europe, and of Montgomery, Tedder, Bradley,

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Patton, and other top British and American officers who had served in or under SHAEF.

At that point I remarked, a bit ruefully, that his approval of the character portraits was emphatically not shared by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery. Certainly the portrait I had drawn of Monty, using materials derived fully as much from British officers (notably Tedder and Ken Strong) as from American, was not flattering, though I still think it was, as psychological analysis, sound. In the circumstances I could not blame Monty for being hurt by it. The book's acknowledgments indicated that the Eisenhower family, including Ike, had cooperated with the author, and this in turn must have suggested to Monty that what the book said is what Ike thought. Monty was furious. His fury was made known to English publishers who had been bidding for British publication rights to the book (one of them was Hamish Hamilton, who had published the British edition of my first novel). They promptly withdrew their offers, and the book was never published in England. Moreover, Monty let Ike know directly how he felt about the book, in a letter Ike had received only a day or so before my weekend visit with him. Ike made no mention of the letter that afternoon. He did, however, express with great emphasis his personal opinion of Monty. Ike had a habit of getting up and pacing the floor when he wanted to emphasize his remarks, and he did so as he told me, and I quote verbatim: "Monty is a *little* man—little physically, little mentally, little in every way." He went on to cite, and to vent his irritation over, episodes in which Monty had displayed arrogance, egotism, touchiness, and vanity.

He also let me know that afternoon precisely what he thought of his aide Harry Butcher and the publication of Butch's *My Three Years with Eisenhower*. This volume, extremely valuable to World War II historians for precisely the reasons it embarrassed and angered Ike, was a diary Butch had been permitted to keep (doing so was in violation of Navy wartime regulations) *for* Ike, to refresh the supreme commander's memory when his dealings with a current event required this, and also to provide material for Ike's own war memoirs when and if he decided to write them. Butch himself had told me as much overseas, where he repeatedly referred to the diary during my information-gathering sessions with him; and I now began to feel sorry for him, whom I greatly liked personally, as Ike dressed him down in absentia. Ike could be so blistering! I had reasons of my own for regretting what Butch had done—my book would have been a Book-of-the-Month Club selection if Butch's had not been pending, and first serial rights to my book would have been saleable for a good price if Butch had not sold his to the *Saturday Evening Post* for $275,000. All the same, I at last attempted a defense of my friend, saying I knew he idolized Ike and had no notion Ike would

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now feel as he did. The general would have none of that. "Butch knew exactly what he was doing," said an angry Ike (I quote from a letter I wrote Milton a few days later). "There are just two things Butch cares about, (1) getting his name in the paper in a favorable way, and (2) money."

Ike and I talked a good deal about politics. I particularly remember him saying, apropos the then-recent replacement of the Tory Churchill by the Socialist Attlee as British prime minister, that he himself was "willing to go along a little left of center 'til it comes to socialism"—a remark that can drive you a little crazy if you think about it too much and that seemed revelatory of far less political sophistication, far less knowledge of the deep-running political currents of the times, than I had thought he possessed.

Ike was much more impressive in his talk about himself in relation to the American partisan politics of the moment. During my talks with him in England and Normandy, he had manifested an acute and accurate awareness of his symbolic role—his role as symbol as well as military architect of Allied unity and his role as military hero profoundly dedicated to the making and maintenance of world peace. At one of his meetings with the five of us war correspondents at his personal headquarters in August 1944, having spoken as he always did about the "splendid cooperation" of Allied commanders, he added that "perhaps it gives a pattern for future cooperation to keep the peace." During the triumphs given him upon his return from Europe in June 1945, he had spoken of the "absolute necessity" of peace if civilization were to survive; he had stressed the need for cooperation, adding, of course, that "we must be strong ourselves" because "weakness cannot cooperate with anything"; and he had inveighed against isolationism.

His sense of symbolic function seemed even stronger in early 1946. He told me about the delegations of important people who were continually calling upon him, promising "fantastic" sums of money to finance a presidential campaign on his behalf if only he would declare himself "available" or, at the very least, promise not to withdraw his name when others proposed it. At that time, both political parties sought to claim him as its own, and he regarded this as evidence of a special social value he then possessed but would promptly lose if ever he entered partisan politics. The great need for the American democracy in the postwar period was "unity," he said (he was thinking here of foreign policy and the danger of a return to isolationism); of that unity, whereby America retained her integrity while joining in strong international organizations to keep the peace, he himself was the chief effective symbol.

"But if I became a candidate for either party, approximately half the

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people in this country would be against me at once," he said, adding that the only circumstance in which he would seriously consider running would be the unlikely one in which *both* parties drafted him.

He made it very clear that day that he felt he had reached and passed the climax of his career—that he thought of his career in the past tense. This came through especially strongly in things he said when he took me through his historic house and showed me the collection of decorations, awards, and gifts that had poured in upon him these last years. There was a certain wistfulness, a mood of retrospection tinged with sadness, a weariness. "He's very tired, your brother," I wrote to Milton the following week, "much more tired than he was in Normandy. . . . He confesses that he's VERY tired." Later I was given good reason to believe, and I *do* believe, that he was at that time passing through a profound crisis in his secret life, an emotional crisis having Kay Summersby at its heart. He mentioned her that afternoon, twice I think, when her name was not perceptibly relevant to what we were talking about. He had mentioned Harry Butcher and others of his personal staff who now "cashed in," commercially, on their association with him. "At least Kay hasn't tried to cash in," he said—and I wondered at the time about his use of the phrase "at least."

IV

My admiration for Ike, my faith in him as a great man, was then at its highest tide. "I wish he could get about six months off, for complete relaxation," I gushed to Milton in a 1946 letter. "It'd be horrible if they burned him out in that hotbed of Washington. He's such a great person, and the country needs him. Seems to me he keeps GROWING all the time—that he's what they call a 'bigger man' now than he was in Normandy, even—and he looked great to me then. It's a bigness of total character that he has, not merely brilliance of mind or charm of personality. It has been a great privilege to know him, even as briefly and slightly as I've known him."

This feeling about him remained at its highest tide when, in the late spring of 1947, I resigned from NYU's faculty and returned from Manhattan Island to Manhattan, Kansas, where, almost at once, I went to work full-time for Milton Eisenhower. Milton's was a dual role that year and the next: he continued as president of Kansas State, but he was also chairman of the U.S. National Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which was then a brand-new and excitingly hopeful venture, much in the news. The commission chairmanship was virtually a full-time job in itself. I served Milton in both of his roles, and we worked very closely together

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for the next two years and for a year or so afterward. I had done and continued to do a great deal of ghostwriting for him—and I know of no better way to learn how a man's mind works, what his basic motives are, than to write his speeches and articles. We established a quite remarkable rapport. My wife was often astonished at the way he and I could convey to one another the meaning of whole sentences, even whole paragraphs, with a single word or, often, wordlessly, with a shrug or change of facial expression. This facilitated our getting through much work in a short time, under pressure. We traveled a lot together, shared hotel suites for weeks at a time at conferences in the U.S. and international conferences in Mexico City and Beirut. (How lovely Beirut was when we were there!) Thus, during this time, I watched Ike's operations very closely through Milton's eyes. I listened closely to Milton's talk, and he talked a lot, about his brother.

All through this period, as my theretofore unclouded view of the general began to be shadowed, alas, by new doubts and new questions, I kept comparing Milton with Ike and wishing more and more that it was Milton and not Ike who was being drawn into presidential politics. He was much the better equipped of the two for the highest governmental office. He operated from a much wider and more solid intellectual base than Ike did, had no such blind commitment to the special interests of big business as Ike began in those years increasingly to manifest. Milton was much more concerned with and knowledgeable about the essential meaning of American democracy, and he had some clear ideas of his own, drawn from extensive and profound experience of the workings of government in Washington—ideas about the goals our democracy should pursue, and about the *way* in which they should be pursued, in the twentieth century. On the national commission for UNESCO in those years were Archibald MacLeish, Nobel laureate Harold Urey, Nobel laureate Arthur Compton, philosopher Richard McKeon, *New York Times* foreign affairs columnist Anne O'Hare McCormick, among others no less distinguished—and these people not only accepted but enthusiastically approved Milton's leadership of their UNESCO enterprise. They would not have responded so to Ike. They would instead have responded in the negative way that a major segment of the faculty and student body of Columbia University was responding at precisely that time to the general as university president.

My UNESCO commission friends and I could see no good reason for Columbia's trustees to offer the general the presidency of their university—this in late 1947. (What seems actually to have happened is that the trustees, seeking a successor to Nicholas Murray Butler, asked Robert Hutchins of the University of Chicago, among others, for suggestions. Hutchins suggested Eisenhower, meaning Milton. This suggested the

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magic name of Ike to trustee Tom Watson, head of IBM.) I saw even less reason for Ike to accept the offer. Nothing in his earlier experience prepared him for leadership in the academic world, not even the kind of front-man, money-raising "leadership" that had begun to be required of most college presidents. He admitted as much to reporters who interviewed him on Columbia's campus when his appointment was first announced, doing so with a frankness that, if disarming, was also disturbing to those who cared about higher education. "I hope," he said to reporters, "to talk to various officials while I am here and get some advance inkling of what a college president is up against. I know nothing about it." Why, then, did he take it? His predecessor on Morningside Heights had been a perennial candidate for Republican presidential nomination. Was the same post now regarded by Ike, or by the big businessmen with whom he now more and more exclusively associated, as a way station between the army and the Republican White House?

The question seemed finally answered in late January 1948, a few days before Ike's term as chief of staff ended and he resigned from active army service. He refused to permit his name to be entered in the New Hampshire primary, in a letter saying that "the necessary and wise subordination of the military to the civil power will be best sustained, and our people will have greater confidence that it is being sustained, when lifelong professional soldiers, in the absence of some serious and overriding reasons, abstain from seeking high political office." Politics, he continued, "is a profession; a serious, complicated, and, in its true sense, a noble one. In the American scene I see no dearth of men fitted by training, talent, and integrity for national leadership. On the other hand, nothing in the international or domestic scene especially qualifies for the most important office in the world a man whose adult years have been spent in the country's military forces. At least this is true in my case."

Abruptly the previously loud talk of him for president died to a whisper. Abruptly, too, there was a resurgence of my own former faith in Ike's living wisdom, in the accuracy of his self-perceptions, in his conception of his historic role, and in the integrity of his character. (I'm using *integrity* here in its precise meaning of oneness and wholeness of being—of unflawed unity.)

In the interim between the end of his staff-chief term and his Columbia inaugural, Ike himself cashed in on his heroic fame by producing, under contract with Doubleday (I was told he chose Doubleday in part because of the way that house had handled my book *Soldier of Democracy*), a book of war memoirs entitled *Crusade in Europe*. Ken McCormick and Lee Barker, then Doubleday's top editors, insisted to me, as of course they did to the public, that the general wrote every word of this two-hundred-

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thousand-word tome in just five weeks, with only minor editorial assistance from Joe Barnes, who at that time was foreign editor of the New York *Herald-Tribune* and who had ghosted Wendell Willkie's *One World*. The general had dictated it, they said. Perhaps he did.

But if so, and if he also wrote his Columbia inaugural address, how can one account for the striking difference in quality between the two? His book was notable for clarity and concision of statement, his public speech for turgidity and verbosity; and in his dealings with academic freedom, more and more often gravely threatened in that year as the Cold War was developing, his Columbia inaugural was alarmingly self-contradictory. I'll personally never forget the shock of disappointment, of utter dismay, with which I read this speech: "To protect academic freedom," said this new president of one of the great American universities, "the teacher must support the entire free system which, among other things, guarantees freedom for all." His use of the word *must* seemed to indicate that the "freedom" referred to was of the kind Hegel defined as the "appreciation of necessity." The statement seems to say that, as regards his teaching about our "system," the teacher is "free" to do as he must. The phrase "free system" was not clearly defined in his address. He indicated his conception of it, however, when he said: "All our cherished rights—the right of free speech, free worship, ownership of property, equality before the law—all these are mutually dependent for their existence. Thus when shallow critics denounce the profit motive inherent in our system of free enterprise, they ignore the fact that it is an economic support of every human right we possess and that without it, all rights would soon disappear. Their demagoguery, unless combated by truth, can become as great a danger to freedom as exists in any other threat." The vehemence of this statement, its manifest unfairness to all who might disagree with its thesis, was disquieting, and the statement as a whole seemed to indicate an economic determinism much closer to the philosophy of Karl Marx than to that of Thomas Jefferson. It was, overall, an appalling intellectual performance from my point of view, though no more so than a half dozen of his later public speeches.

He now moved ever deeper into a fog of ambiguity whereby every perceptible line of his character became badly blurred; and one was forced at last to conclude that the main source of this fog was Ike himself—that ambiguity had become the very essence of his mind, his psyche. With the publication of *Crusade in Europe*, he became an author who was *not* an author; in an utterly incredible ruling, the Internal Revenue Service permitted him to pay only a 25-percent capital gains tax instead of the much higher income tax on the $800,000 or so the book made for him, this because the general was not a professional writer! Simultaneously he became an educator who was not an educator, for at

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Columbia he promptly insulated himself from the faculty behind a wall of "staff" and had virtually nothing to do directly with academic administration. He was also a Republican who still might be, as some insisted he was, a Democrat—this until Truman won his surprising victory over Dewey in the fall of 1948, at which point the big businessmen with whom Ike now almost exclusively associated began to increase their pressures upon him to run as a Republican in 1952. He then began to talk more and more like a Republican candidate, while continuing to deny flatly any possibility of his becoming one. In one notorious statement during this period, he asserted with utmost emphasis that only *he* could speak for himself in politics, yet went on to say that if some of his friends thought they knew him so well that they could speak for him, they were perfectly at liberty to do so—on their own responsibility, of course.

I find psychological significance in the fact that it was at the outset of his period as president of Columbia that Ike took up painting as a pastime. It became rather more to him than a pastime. It became almost a compulsion, as I learned long afterward when I wrote the text for a very fancy and expensive huge-format book reproducing Ike's paintings in the Eisenhower College Collection. He seemed literally driven to his easel, not by any overwhelming passion for aesthetic expression, but by a desperate need to escape problems he felt himself incompetent to solve. (Painting, he once told a *New York Times* reporter, "is the best way in the world to relax.") In the White House, on his way from his living quarters to the Executive Office, or on the way back, he often ducked into a closet-like room in which he'd set up an easel, there to apply some more brush strokes to canvas.

All too typical of the postwar Eisenhower was the manner in which he finally entered the 1952 presidential campaign. In early 1950, with such relief to Columbia's faculty and to himself as one can imagine, he had taken a leave of absence from the university in order to accept Truman's assignment of him to NATO command in Europe. His headquarters were in Paris, where he was visited by Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts in January 1952. When he returned to America, Lodge told a press conference that the general was a Republican, that the general would accept the Republican nomination if it were offered, and that this statement would not be denied by the general. Next day, Eisenhower, beseiged by reporters, made his reply. In it he did not flatly say he was a Republican; he said that Senator Lodge's announcement "gives an accurate account of the general tenor of my political convictions and of my Republican voting record." He did not clearly approve the campaign being mounted on his behalf; he said that "of course there is no question of the right of American citizens to organize in pursuit of their common convictions." He did not even

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clearly say that he would accept nomination; he said that Senator Lodge and associates had a "right to attempt to place before me next July a duty that would transcend my present responsibilities," but that "in the absence . . . of a clearcut call to political duty, I shall continue to devote my full attention and energies to the performance of the vital tasks to which I am assigned."

The only thing wholly unequivocal in his entire statement was the assertion that "under no circumstances will I ask for relief from this assignment in order to seek nomination to political office and I shall not participate in the pre-convention activities of others who may have such an intention with respect to me." Whereupon, in the late spring, he asked for and obtained relief from his assignment, returned to America, and engaged in an intense campaign against Senator Taft for the nomination.

Many assumed that Ike followed this course because he feared that otherwise the Taft-isolationist wing of the Republican party would capture the government. But having won the nomination, and at the very outset of his presidential campaign, he and Taft conferred at Morningside Heights and issued a joint statement in which Ike conceded virtually every point at issue between the liberal or moderate wing of the Republican party and Taft's Old Guard.

"Taft lost the nomination but won the nominee," quipped Adlai Stevenson.

V

The disillusionment that I suffered through this period was a far unhappier, a far more emotionally debilitating experience than the disappointment in Ike that myriads of other Americans increasingly felt. I had invested a good deal of such reputation as I had as a young writer in my published conception and assessment of him. He now made me feel I'd made a damned fool of myself in public. Moreover, insofar as I remained personally and professionally involved with Milton, upon whom Ike as president would certainly heavily lean, I was forced to make some personal career decisions relating to this involvement. I was thus led by Ike into a land of quandary, a quaking country of suspended judgments, but not for long.

A year after Milton's term as UNESCO commission chairman had ended, he and I agreed, amicably, to disagree and go our separate ways. When he resigned as Kansas State president in order to accept the presidency of Penn State, there was no question of my going with him.

This, however, did not end my involvement with Ike as biographical subject. For inevitably, as soon as it became highly probable that Ike was

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actively going into presidential politics, Doubleday decided to issue, with advertising fanfare, a new edition of *Soldier of Democracy*—a hardcover edition to come out simultaneously with a paperback "giant" issued by Bantam—and I was asked to write an afterword to that book, reviewing Ike's career since 1945. This was neither an attractive proposal nor an easy task for me. It was necessary to weigh Ike as an educator and as a politician on scales different from those that sufficed to weigh him fairly accurately as a professional soldier—and the personal affection I had for Milton, the sense of obligation I had to him and his brothers, were such as to make me reluctant to write anything that would highly displease any of them. But a good deal of money was involved, and I was again a free-lance writer, which is to say I was financially insecure. So I took the job, and did it rather well, I thought at the time (and still think). I gave Ike the full benefit of every doubt, yet dealt factually and analytically with things he'd said and done. When I sent the forty or so pages of manuscript to my editor, Lee Barker, he was enthusiastic about them. He wrote me at once saying so.

Then came trouble—the kind of trouble encountered by many writers who attempted honest critical appraisal of Dwight Eisenhower for publication in the mass media during the 1950s, but rare, I think, for a writer of books. The president of Doubleday in those years was Douglas Black. Black was a trustee of Columbia University, and Doubleday was the publisher of *Crusade in Europe*. Lee felt obliged to show my afterword to Black, and Black, as the saying goes, hit the roof. Back came a letter to me from Lee saying (and he put it mildly) that "Black's reaction to the last chapter was nowhere near as good as mine. . . . For your information, he was one of the five trustees who voted against Eisenhower for president of Columbia, and therefore he has no axe to grind in this." But, of course, he *did* have an axe to grind, he ground it, and he ground me in the process. One of his points was that a singularly nasty right-wing newspaper columnist of those days, George Sokolsky, who wanted Taft to become the Republican presidential nominee, might pick up on what I'd written and make headlines, saying "Eisenhower Biographer States General Intellectually Dishonest." I personally didn't give a damn what Sokolsky said on any subject; but amid a flurry of wires and letters and phone calls, I made some changes in what I'd written, "correcting" things Black insisted were factually wrong (though I doubted they actually were), and sent the revised copy back. Lee, relieved, expressed abundant satisfaction with what I'd done, the afterword went into type, and my wife and I went happily down to Texas to visit friends on a ranch near Fort Worth.

At Fort Worth, where I was beyond the possibility of doing anything about it (publication day was at hand), I received a letter from Lee that

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began: "When we got the last chapter . . . into print we had another look at it, and all of us came to the conclusion [I've a pretty shrewd idea of how it happened they *all* came to the conclusion] that it would still make trouble, particularly at a time when most of the irresponsible journalists are looking for some way to injure Eisenhower [actually the number of irresponsible journalists looking for ways to injure Ike was about one-tenth the number of irresponsible journalists then engaged in glorifying him]. It's pretty obvious that someone of Sokolsky's type will jump to the conclusion that the criticism of Eisenhower in your last chapter represents the unofficial criticisms of the publishers and that the material on Eisenhower's tenure at Columbia represents the opinion of the Columbia trustee who is also president of Doubleday and Co. [What seemed "pretty obvious" to Lee was obviously absurd, of course; it's the kind of argument administrators customarily use when they want to keep something from being said effectively.] It finally seemed to me best to avoid the entire problem by cutting out the long section of the After Word which takes up the question of Eisenhower's effectiveness at Columbia. . . ."

So that is what happened. I became more and more miserable about this after the 1952 campaign began and I discovered that some people thought *Soldier of Democracy* was a campaign biography. Ike's campaign was, from my point of view, and I think from the standpoint of intellectual honesty and a decent respect for the electorate, such a slimy, sleazy operation, what with his betrayal of General George Marshall, his greatest benefactor, and his more than tacit encouragement of McCarthyism. Indeed, Joe McCarthy would probably not have won reelection that year in Wisconsin (by a mere five-thousand-vote margin) if Ike had not deleted from his Milwaukee speech, upon McCarthy's demand, his praise of Marshall and then told his audience that he and McCarthy were agreed as to ends, differing only on "method." Nor could Richard Nixon probably have remained in public life to make the contributions he later made to our democracy if Ike had not embraced him literally ("Dick, you're my boy!") after Nixon's nauseatingly sophistical "Checkers" speech. I would not, in 1946, have thought Ike capable of this—not even remotely.

VI

The last of my more or less direct experiences of Dwight Eisenhower occurred a dozen years later. The reader will recall, I hope, my visit to Fort Myer on the weekend of February 2, 1946, during which Ike vehemently expressed his low opinion of Monty. He had then just received a letter from Monty complaining bitterly about *Soldier of Democracy.*

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Actually, I didn't learn about Monty's letter until the early 1960s, when I was writing a history of the United States in World War II, published in 1965 under the title *Experience of War*. While gathering material, I perforce read *The Memoirs of Field Marshal Montgomery*. I bought a Signet paperback edition of it. On pages 319–20 of that edition I found printed in full a letter Ike wrote, evidently in longhand, to Monty on February 3, 1946—the day after that cordial visit with the general which had been so memorable in my young life.

The letter opens with thanks to Monty for sending him a book Monty had just published, *El Alamein to the River Sangro*, and then goes on to say:

> Your reaction to the book *Soldier of Democracy* is of course exactly what I would expect. There is nothing I deplore so much as the writing of so-called military history by people who are concerned mainly with rushing into print so as to catch a market that is still fresh. It happens that the author of this particular book dropped in to see me yesterday and I complained about the poor light in which several very great men were portrayed. He protested that these persons were brought into the book, merely incidentally, in order to illustrate some particular point and with no thought of attempting to judge their contribution to the war effort.
>
> The comments you make with respect to this book are even more applicable to one that is now being published in serial form and was written by my former Naval Aide, Captain Butcher. It is called *My Three Years with Eisenhower*.

He then goes on at some length to excoriate Butch and to express his immense personal admiration for Monty, before returning to my book, or to me.

> Incidentally [he writes], one of the defenses made by one of these authors [in context, it's clear I'm the one], when I taxed him with bad judgment and inaccuracy, was to pull out a bunch of clippings taken from British papers about the time of the bulge battle. He said: "British writers did not hesitate to criticize you bitterly and unjustly. Why should you be so shy and retiring?" My answer of course was that these reporters wrote during the heat of action and were motivated to some extent by fear. This was an entirely different thing from writing deliberately from the attitude of "pure history," which these books are certainly not.
>
> I suppose there is no use saying anything further on the point except that you are free to express my sentiments to anyone who wants to talk to you about the subject.

That last hardly constitutes permission to publish the letter in a book, and I'm sure Ike had no idea Monty would do so. But, published, the letter completed my disillusionment with the man who wrote it. For up until then, my assumption had been that the two-faced double-dealing so characteristic of Eisenhower the president—the way of operating that

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had been admiringly described by one of the current crop of revisionist historians as "hidden-hand leadership"—manifested character traits that had been wholly latent, if indeed they were present at all, in the man I last talked to in early 1946. They were a *later* development, I had thought—a product of the psychological insecurities he felt after entering fields of endeavor for which he knew himself to be unprepared and probably unfit, this joined with the corrupting influence of more power, more mass adulation, than his kind of ego could handle. The letter was evidence that, in this assumption, I had been mistaken.

Mourner

JANE MAYHALL

How poetic of our country neighbors
to have called their dog Mourner.
As to why he howled from four o'clock in
the afternoon until a half-past seven Louisville
factory-sundown, nobody had the faintest clue.
Over the fence, we saw him squatting on
hind legs, a black and white rather dowdy,
big, comic Doberman pinscher. Some felt he was
dangerous for being so sad. Against the
car garage, he was a one-dog *I Pagliacci*;
the red sky like proscenium lights about to
fade. His grieving belligerence brought
emotions to my childhood that, without
him, I might not have otherwise had.

JANE MAYHALL is the author of *Cousin to Human, Ready for the Ha Ha and Other Satires*, and two books of poetry.

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Greenwich 1930's, II

FREDERICK MORGAN

On the porch overlooking the eighteenth green
blind Mrs. Adams rocked back and forth
grinning, and sipping her tea.
Her nurse-companion, white-uniformed,
sucked peppermints beside her.

At the next table: "Isn't she splendid?
Past eighty-eight and as mean as can be.
Skewered old Charles on her cane last Monday.
How that nurse stands her, I have no idea."

Shrieks and cheers from the pool, where Roger
Ambler was ducking Ellen O'Neill.
Feeling soft breasts against his forearm
he loosed his hold. The girl slipped free—
then wheeled clean about in a shower of spray
and slapped his head hard with the flat of her hand.
"You God damned lout!" . . . She choked with laughter.

My daughters seem happy this afternoon,
thought Mrs. O'Neill beside the en tout cas
where Susan was rallying with the Rinaldis
and Joe the pro. "Watch your backhand, dear."

"Oh mummy, go away! You make me nervous."
Sue missed an overhead at the net,

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but Joe, like a cat, had scrambled behind her
and lobbed the ball deep. "Stay up there," he shouted,
"and cover that alley. Don't let him pass you!"

Meanwhile, fresh chirpings from the porch:
a man in street clothes was walking the fairways!
"He's not carrying clubs, doesn't look like a member—
what's he doing out there all dressed in black?
Call the manager, someone. Quickly!"

No need. It was only the Smythes' chauffeur,
a new one who didn't know the rules
(the word came back ten minutes later).
Mrs. Adams stirred. . . . She felt a small chill
as the five o'clock wind came drifting in
from the Sound—and clutched a shawl to her shoulders.
"Come along, dear booby," she hissed to the nurse,
"get me moving. It's time to go home."

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The Golden Albatross

KARL SHAPIRO

THE POET WAS DISCHARGED from Camp Meade midway between Washington and Baltimore and sat emptily and expectantly with strange soldiers on their bunks with little to say to them or they to him and they lined up and were given their papers and broke ranks and ran to olive-drab waiting buses over concrete roads with grass growing in the straight crevices between the segments of concrete like a garden walk. Grass growing on the highways! That's how the time had passed. Before he went overseas he had visited his brother and his brother's bride in their first new apartment with fragrant new carpeting and new blond furniture and new squat Russell Wright dishware; he had visited them again a few years later when he came back to the same apartment and was shocked to see the carpet worn, the furniture changed around, and different pictures on the walls. That was how time showed itself, grass asserting itself on the still roads, diagonal cracks in the paving, carpets trod down, objects put away, new ones asserting their rights, faces less fresh, new children. One should not leave one's place for so long and expect to find anything as it was remembered. He glanced at the sleeve of his uniform with its service stripes and fingered the small bronze stars on his overseas ribbons as if ready to get rid of them and he wondered what it would be like to wear his own coat, to have to select his own clothes and shoes, for he had forgotten how.

He gathered his wife and after a brief stay in Baltimore, they returned to the little apartment in New York, which the poet now knew was too small, not only because everybody said so but because he could feel it. Where could they go? Not even millionaires could find a different place to live, there had been no building anywhere except for the military, and thousands, soon hundreds of thousands of soldiers were beginning to come back, and they had better stay where they were and they knew that they couldn't somehow and they began to make inquiries of writers and editors they knew who lived outside the city and they discovered a way. The art critic of *The New Yorker* was getting a divorce and his wife, a sculptor, was going to give up their house in the country, far up in

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Connecticut somewhere but in an area where writers and editors lived and painters like Arshile Gorky and Peter Blume and where Hart Crane used to visit and where he wrote "Quaker Hill" and got drunk on highly fermented apple cider and all the writers of *The New Republic* lived there and everybody spoke or tried to speak French because they were the people of the famous literary Exile of the Twenties which they would all write about forever. The poet was enthralled, the wife was enthralled and relieved, though she was already pregnant, had been pregnant since the second month of his return and there would be no doctor or hospital around for miles and not even a grocery store for miles and they had no car, but a famous poet had said he was going to England the moment he could and he would rent his Model A Ford to the poet if he would come and get it.

They made the move. An aspiring novelist drove them there in a large strong car in which he hauled bricks. He had become a bricklayer and did itinerant jobs to make enough money for a few months and then go to his house that he was building himself and build and write until he ran low on money and went off on his itinerant bricklaying. All the writers admired his way of handling his life.

The house had been designed for a sculptor with big plans, it was all two-story living room or studio for massive work but there were no statues, only miniatures standing on a sideboard, not models or "sketches" the poet decided but just miniatures, a diminution of power and ambition. But in one corner hung a real Calder, a rust rooster in pure abstraction hanging from the high rafters and barely turning with the motion of the breeze, and Calder too lived not far away, though "close-by" in this rocky unfarmable area did not exist. The nearest neighbor was an invisible half-mile away and most twice that and more. He saw a deer across the ravine, then another, and went out on the big screened porch and spotted a giant tortoise waddling away.

He had come to this retreat, for that was what he quickly discovered it to be, newly famous and was treated with deferential respect, respect for the big prize he had won, which was the one poetry prize in America that even ordinary people knew about and was mentioned in almost every newspaper in the land, because it was a newspaper prize that celebrated newspaper writers primarily but also the best novelist of the year, or so it was assumed, and also the best poet, and deference because he was new and young, though he didn't think of himself as young but among the writers of the bohemian Exile he was only a fledgling and was only nineteen when Hart, as they called Crane, jumped off the *Orizaba* in the Caribbean while the wife of one of the Exiles was waiting for him in her stateroom. They talked about Hart so much that the poet, who loved Crane, began to hate him and began to feel uncomfortable around the

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Exiles with their French and their hearing aids and their fancy cooking and he knew he would not be happy here in the midst of the last generation, as he thought of them. He didn't want to be their mascot or protégé and had always felt that the attempt of the Exile's wife to "save" Hart Crane from homosexuality was lunacy and might have driven him overboard, that and the way the educated Exiles had treated this bumpkin from Ohio, genius or not, with their devastating criticism. But this new poet had snatched the brass ring and the Prize was their Prize and like it or not he was something of their captive.

He could never decide whether he was really happy to have the Prize. Like every writer, he wanted, demanded recognition from his fellows the writers and was delighted to have a passport to the ordinary world which the Prize provided but he had always held the Prize in low esteem. It was a middlebrow honor at best and it had always been given to *intelligible* writers, those with a large reading public and he knew that a large reading public was the most suspect readership of all, especially in America where the reading level was never above sixth grade even among college graduates.

He was at his wife's apartment (as he thought of it) and still in uniform when the news came. One of the judges of the Prize, whose name was synonymous with anthology, spilled the beans to the poet's wife on the telephone and swore her to secrecy. They were overjoyed and the poet was beside himself. He had proved himself to his *family and friends* and all the other non-writers who had never taken him seriously and had wondered what kind of future he could have, if any. But the magical name of the Prize was common, universal knowledge and he knew that forever after whenever his name was mentioned in the newspapers or a magazine it would be coupled with the Prize and that the Prize-givers would never let anyone forget that they were the founders and donors of the Prize, which was after all only a newspaper prize, and the poet knew that the poets would use it against him. After all, Eliot and Pound and Cummings and Williams and Hart Crane had never won the Prize or even come close. They won prizes like the Dial which Americans had never even heard of. It was not until after the War that the poets set up a counter-prize and it would be many years before the poet won that one. Meanwhile he basked in the common acceptance of his achievement and felt very grateful for his wife's part in what was now becoming a career.

All the poems in the winning book had been written while he was overseas except one, a satire on himself written in the style of Andrew Marvell, and the book was well-titled *V-Letter,* or victory-letter as the photostats of mail from overseas were called, and the book would be reprinted in England on bad butcher-paper at the dead end of the War

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and copies of the American edition would be put into ship libraries of the U.S. Navy which he would not know about until years later when ships were decommissioned and people would send him copies from the U.S.S. This and the U.S.S. That, and this to him, though it wouldn't be to the other poets, was the major achievement. Maybe he deserved to win the Prize that he felt so ambivalent about. After a while he began to call it the Golden Albatross because he knew fairly well that he would always be able to get lectures, even jobs, even good jobs, doing what he wanted in and around poetry and he wouldn't have to sit behind a librarian's desk answering silly questions about how to address a duchess or which zoos keep unicorns, and that people who had never read a book, much less a book of poetry, much less Rimbaud or Hart Crane, would know that he had won the Prize, it didn't matter whether for cartooning or "covering" a battle or writing poems, he had won the Prize and that made him special with all rights and privileges appertaining thereto and he was hands-off to ordinary occupations and preoccupations and could go his own way and do practically whatever he liked, even to not paying his bills. He would have to fight to keep the Golden Albatross from owning him. But meanwhile the Exiles had him and his precious Prize, had him both ways, as a new young local celebrity and as a Prize-winner they could upstage, and the poet didn't like the spot he was in with these French-speaking, gourmet-eating, hearing-aid expatriates who wrote for all the liberal magazines and were country squires really and were out to make him and his wife one of their commune.

He went to Cape Cod where the famous old poet lived and picked up the Model A and went to Boston with him to a museum but the poet was anxious to get back to where he was still sorting himself out and passed up the opportunity to go to a literary party and meet New England writers and poets and got in the antique car and drove back to the sculptor's house without stopping except for gas and not even for food.

There were guests, the poet's mother once, the sister and her husband, back from the War in Middle Europe, the wife's friends, mostly girlfriends and one handsome blond giant, some aristocratic New Yorker who had been a high-ranking officer in the Army and jocularly ordered the poet around, calling him playfully Sergeant, while he did outside chores which the poet didn't know how to do, such as putting up huge porch screens to keep the wasps out. The big studio room was full of wasps which terrified the wife but the poet swatted them with his hand and was never stung, they were so sluggish he said, after the lightning-quick red centipedes that got you before you saw them in New Guinea and sent you howling with pain and racing around outside the tent while the tent-mates roared with laughter.

They visited back and forth with the Exiles and listened to their

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histories of the great world that had gone into their writings, for they were all living in the past and had only contempt for the present, and the poet wondered if that would happen to him in time and he prayed it wouldn't, he hadn't had any glamorous past and wasn't having one now but was living among manikins, good people he thought but in a time-trap they would never get out of. Well-known, not-known, and famous writers showed up at their parties, some whose names he knew only from anthologies or even encyclopedias and he was awed. The poet was always polite and never argued with these bigwigs and in a sense only spoke when he was spoken to. He didn't feel that he belonged to their world or even the world of writers because he had never been in such a world and didn't know what to expect or how to act but he thought he should act *somehow* and didn't know how.

One guest, a southern poet and critic, a small elegant man radiating influence, was extremely friendly. He had written a review of one of the poet's books in which he compared him favorably with T. S. Eliot, and this southerner was the American exponent of Eliot himself and in spite of his reactionary politics, as they were called, was printed in all the best radical magazines and listened to closely. He visited one of the liberal neighbors frequently and at one gathering asked the poet what he would do after his year of living in the country was up, for everyone knew that the poet and his wife were living on his severance pay from the Army and they were expecting a baby, and the poet said he had no idea, he hadn't thought about it, and the influential exponent of T. S. Eliot asked if he would be interested in becoming the Consultant in Poetry at the Library of Congress. It paid very well, the southern gentleman said, and there were no duties unless the Consultant invented some. The poet had heard of sinecures but thought they existed only in Europe and he said yes he would like to be the Consultant in Poetry.

Thus he was knighted as a Member of the Establishment and it was as if he had won the Prize a second time and had had an oak-leaf cluster added to the Congressional Medal of Honor. He had not really wanted a job, if it was a job, and hadn't done anything about it and was still not adjusted to the idea of having to have a job when he had been gainfully employed, as they say, for four years in the Army and had done what he was told, more or less, and gone where he was sent, for he had no choice and no real objective of the kind that people go to federal penitentiaries for, and was paid practically nothing like all soldiers for risking their lives, which was not what they were drafted for, nothing heroic but only to sit behind typewriters or stand behind counters in sheds and do what you were told and make your bed, so that the whole idea of a job hadn't quite sunk in, especially as he had won the Prize and part of him felt that jobs were beneath him, like a prize ram at the county fair with a blue

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ribbon hanging from its neck and not knowing why it was there and all he had to do was to stand in his stall and munch grass and be stared at. The Exiles were surprised that he was not more excited. Hart Crane would have jumped out of his skin and the poet thought, poor Hart Crane, he wished he had known him, they would have understood each other in a flash and neither of them would talk about Hemingway shadowboxing in front of the window of the Ritz bar before he went in.

He didn't really enjoy the year in the beautiful deer-strolling rock-studded countryside of Connecticut and felt sad most of the time, cut off from everything, even the Army and the War. He and his wife were in the nearest town, New Milford, when Germany surrendered and the people were dancing and drinking in the streets and he didn't feel anything, not even glad it was over because he had become part of the war-state-of-mind and didn't think it was over and didn't think it would ever be over because nobody knows how not to make war and it was almost like a celebration of the local high-school football victory, it was so provincial and stupid and he wished there was a better way to celebrate victory, especially as they all had sick and wounded and dead in the town from the War and everybody hated Krauts and Japs, the little yellow bastards, and this was the thing to do. He went home very depressed.

The pregnancy got bigger and everyone walked on eggshells, especially as the wife looked like an eggshell about to hatch and in the winter they drove to New York where they had rented a furnished two-room apartment and sat and waited while she visited the doctor every other day. She was going to the Doctors' Hospital in front of the Queensborough Bridge which the poet liked because it resembled a steel candelabra. It was a superior hospital for superior people and he could not remember how she had gotten into it at all, a hospital where menus were delivered to the room by what looked like orderlies but which might have been stewards, and a *wine list!* The poet had never seen a wine list in his life and looked at the curious French titles (without prices) and didn't know what to make of it.

The baby was born famous, presided over by the Golden Albatross, for her arrival was broadcast by a world-known columnist from the dark backward and abysm of journalism all over the nation and "to all you ships at sea" that in Babylon a child was born to the Prizewinner, and the poet was elated and horrified simultaneously for himself and the child and mother and the nurses came to look at this alert dark-eyed child that was already lifting its head up, like a turtle, the poet said, and peering around though he was told she couldn't really see anything except light and shadow.

The bricklayer-writer came with his car after a week to drive them all

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back to the studio-house and the poet insisted on driving even on the twisty icy road along the Housatonic River in the dark while the bricklayer sat white-knuckled beside him and the wife and the baby sat in the back and he drove too fast and the writer said whatever you do don't touch the brake but they reached home and ever after the poet remembered this drive with pure horror and wondered if he had been trying to kill everybody.

The house became a nursery with the big screened-in crib on rubber wheels, screened on all sides and on top because of the wasps which were always inside the high studio somehow and the poet stayed up nights rocking the crib back and forth on wheels because the moment he stopped pushing the crib the baby woke up and yelled as only the newborn know how to do while the wife slept upstairs in the one upstairs room to be away from the noise and was in fact very weak from the experience of childbirth and evidently from relief that the baby was beautiful and smart and above all normal. And now the baby became the center of the writer-artist community for there hadn't been a baby of crib-size in the area for years and all the wives and mistresses of the writers and artists came to pay homage and bring country-style gifts, preserves and knitted things and home remedies for chapped bottoms and constipation and handmade toys to hang up in view of the screened-in domicile of the newcomer. The poet learned to cook bottles and make formulas and wash diapers and took pleasure in it, not even stopping to complain but actually preferring to take care of the child himself for some reason as if he were both mother and father in one and his domesticity became a topic of conversation and witticisms and even the great poet Williams wrote him a letter addressed to Papa Shapiro, this salutation displeasing the poet for some reason, but then Williams was a famous baby doctor in his part of New Jersey and had seen a lot of papas in his time and would see a lot more but the poet took the witticism as some kind of demotion from his true status.

The winter spun along with days and nights mixed with bottles and diapers and visitors and even dinner parties and the poet writing in the nursery-studio in between and driving the Model A to the grocery when one day he received the formal letter from the Library of Congress informing him of his appointment as Consultant in Poetry and stating his salary which seemed immense and asking him if he objected to signing a loyalty oath and setting a date for an introduction to the Librarian himself. He would never have an objection to signing a loyalty oath and always said that people who did were prigs, and hadn't he asserted his loyalty by being in the Army four years and what was wrong with any reassertion of loyalty. Besides, the Library of Congress was a place he felt an almost proprietary interest in because it was Thomas Jefferson's

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library, it was his idea and his books to begin with and the poet already knew a lot about the Library from having studied it in his library course and was very impressed that the Librarian was the only person appointed for life in the whole government except the members of the Supreme Court, that the President himself chose him and the Senate had to approve the appointment. The poet-librarian Archibald MacLeish had nevertheless resigned to become the head of UNESCO—Educational-Scientific-Cultural, the poet spelled out to himself—a bigger kind of responsibility and had been replaced by a Texan who was not a poet and whom he would meet. The Library by now was the savior of Culture with a capital *C* and famous poets in exile from fascism were given consultantships, Aléxis Saint-Léger (St.-John Perse) from France, Juan Ramón Jiménez from Spain, for instance, and the poet would walk with these figures himself down the gilt and marble corridors as in a dream, and the Library had copied on film hundreds of thousands of Chinese works from antiquity which were in danger of destruction by the Japanese and the Russians who were already inching into China to take it and keep it.

One of the Exiles would return the Model A to the Cape when its owner returned from England, and they made their good-byes to the "commune" and boarded the train to Washington, or rather Virginia where the poet had rented a furnished apartment in Arlington, as close to Washington as they were able to get, an apartment in a "complex" totally devoid of character, where government minor officials and civil servants lived and all of a certain age, all with babies and toddlers pushed in strollers up and down the sidewalks by young mothers who all had college degrees from State Colleges and who read *The Nation* and *The New Republic* where the poet published some of his poems, a bit of news which got about in the complex somehow, so that the poet was sometimes greeted on the sidewalks with indications of recognition which he appreciated.

If there is such a thing as a literary life, and the poet knew there was such a thing and had read about it in hundreds of contexts and texts since he began to read, so that he shared the common universal view that writers have a life that no one else can participate in and that it is superior to every other kind of life, he would now get as close to it as he ever would in his own life before he discovered that he didn't really belong there and was being kicked out of its orbit as fast as he would come close to the magic circle. Not that this made him any different from many other writers and poets who were sucked toward the flame, moths that they were, but that he didn't know about the peripherals, they were all considered sports, eccentrics, oddballs, runaways, even traitors committing the treason of clerks against the priesthood of writers and

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artists, against Culture itself. Meanwhile he was just a new bright luna moth fluttering toward the soft sweet fire to the oohs and ahs of the feathered assembly with long bills and sharp eyes who seemed to pay little or no attention.

Well, yes, they paid attention, it was part of the job to dance attendance on the newcomer, to indoctrinate him, admit him to the closed doors and the secret names and special gestures of the great or near-great or self-styled great and the once-great. After all, they had appointed him (annointed him) in conclave and he wasn't so stupid as to be unaware of his debt, his acknowledgment, his honor. He was polite, even well-mannered in his self-invented way and was even credited with a kind of charm, a mixture of shyness and boldness, of downcast eyes and glares, of sheepishness and bared fangs and could roll over and play dead and also bite and not let go, but he didn't know this and didn't practice anything and could not ever predict his own behavior with anybody and usually left a literary gathering thinking he had disgraced himself for good.

He met the Living Anthology, poets he had never dreamed of being with in what seemed to be drawing rooms—he would never discover what that term was supposed to mean—and would listen well, respond tolerably well he thought, be serious for a moment, witty for a moment, the way those non-conversations went, and was surprised to see that nobody ever spoke about poetry or about literature, which was absolutely taboo except at dinner tables where non-literary people such as wives were seated between lions and one was expected to be addressed by these lower orders about sacred subjects if only to elicit a crack they could then repeat to their bridge partners or neighbors. "Conversational" was tangential to everything, no "shop," certainly no considered opinions except maybe politics, which was contrary to the lingua franca of middle-class books of etiquette, the only common ground of the classes, of the human race. He began to comprehend that conversation was bite-sized in this atmosphere, that one took a bite and a sip and then said excuse me and moved off to another bite and sip and that although nothing was ever said that meant anything, what was said meant a hell of a lot and would or might stick to one's mind like a Band-Aid or a bit of poison ivy and keep one itching for weeks.

What he liked best was the brushing of elbows, the slight looks and exchanges of the poets who were great, who were held in awe by the world, even by the stuffy diplomats he had begun to meet at these meets, who prided themselves on having one of these lions at their house like a political triumph and who looked down on everybody who came as a matter of course and even considered them as toadies, as Second or Third Secretaries or even clerks who had somehow crashed the party,

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and the poet conceived a loathing for these monsters who had been appointed by the President and approved by the august Senate because they were so rich with money they had inherited or swiped fair and square from the American people, like the Irish Joe Kennedy who had been given the whiskey franchise in exchange for the Massachusetts Catholic vote and who, to add insult to injury to the British aristocracy, or what was left of it, was made Ambassador to the Court of St. James.

He stood in a separate room with the other poets and writers and wives and unknowns and glanced from time to time into another room where sitting beside the fire T. S. Eliot was in close converse with St.-John Perse, actually talking about Eliot's translation of Perse's *Anabase* which the French poet had reservations about, Perse told the poet the next day at the Library. But what he really cherished to remember was a moment when he was talking to the French poet and a woman appeared in the doorway of the room behind the poet's back and the Frenchman's face lit up like a sunrise and he excused himself and went to her.

The Consultant's office with its fine view of the Capitol and its Renaissance furniture was soon a hallway of poets come on errands so various that he was glad he had hired a secretary to shoo some of them away. Most of them pleaded, or demanded, the Privilege of the Taxpayer, saying that because they paid taxes, paid for the Library of Congress, which of course they didn't, the Library was obliged to house the letters and poems of their uncles and aunts and of themselves and even to publish them. Classrooms of children came to peer in with their teachers because of the view of the Capitol across the way. Photographers traipsed in and out for various reasons until the poet and his efficient secretary devised various methods of exclusion such as keeping the doors closed and even locked, with a small notice of a phone extension. He could never write in the Renaissance room, not a word, but learned to dictate to the secretary who knew to make fourteen copies of everything including a request for a box of paper clips and gradually reduced the tension of the high office to a minimum so that he could come and go and take poets to lunch or for a beer across the street where a line of rundown shops and counter restaurants provided the only entertainment on the august Hill.

He settled into a routine and spent hours in the dreamy stacks, for he had permission to wander everywhere as a Consultant, and could finger volumes that should have been under glass and even open boxes of manuscript that were forbidden to be published for seventy-five years. He would run into the famous Consultants on these tours and stop and sit down and talk and the famous sad-looking Jiménez gave him a copy of one of his books of poems with his inscription. The poet was constantly sensitive to the fact that he was living in a treasure house and he trod

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softly between the bureaucrats who kept the gilded establishment up and the treasures themselves. He didn't really like the job.

He didn't have to work hard but he did. He didn't have to work at all, as he knew, it was a non-job, a title-job without duties, but he invented the job, a place for poets to come and put their works down on wax, and other people sent works to him, the relatives of famous writers, the self-promoted generals from old history books or supposedly from those times, it didn't matter really, it was all history and libraries are all history and he was a librarian and understood and loved it, loved even the Renaissance furniture which he was afraid to touch and the houses he went to in Georgetown where the silent great lived who ran the whole government and the War and by now the World and everyone knew that and accepted it as a matter of fact because who else was going to run it.

The Consultantship was only for a year, which didn't bother the poet who couldn't see a year ahead and saw no reason to, but one day he was invited to give a lecture at his old school, Johns Hopkins in fact, for a few faculty of the English Department "on a subject of his own choice." He had an unlikely choice—prosody, a secret love the very name of which had been forgotten except among the old philologists who still had the upper hand in their corner of the small famous university. The poet had always had a penchant for this crotchety disestablished subject whose tomes had gathered dust for a century in vast libraries which coveted such things. He had done the whole bibliography on the q.t. for his personal predilection; he knew that most prosodists were batty Brits, eccentrics from the eighteenth century mostly who sat in country houses trying to figure out the versification of metrical feet in Elizabethan soliloquies and because they couldn't succeed invented a Theory and then decorated the Theory with a Notational System. The poet found this all not only charming but satisfying; he could have talked for days with these nuts; he was such a nut himself and he loved the people who devised these screens to keep themselves from milking cows or beating servants for stealing the silver.

He wrote his lecture, contrasting the stress and foot system of Saintsbury with the "temporal" system of the American poet and musician Lanier, also a Baltimorean of sorts and a Southern Gentleman of high repute from the Civil War days. "The obscurities of recent versification," he said, "are explained as an attempt to introduce prose structures into regularly metrical lines." And he explained the reunification of the two systems as a fusion of two older systems—a fusion of the North and the South, as it were. The Johns Hopkins English Department offered him a job. He took it.

He didn't want a job as such, he wasn't looking for a job, he didn't and did want to go back to his old school where he was technically a

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sophomore still and where all his family lived, but he had to re-establish his physical presence in Baltimore again and would go there, cum wife and child, to say he had risen, and there was no question about it and it was all settled. The Library of Congress appointment had already fixed him in a constellation which a canny part of him accepted and even approved; he would be a Professor and see what that was like.

Generally speaking, a poet in the Academy is neither flesh, fish nor fowl, even if he is a scholar, rare to impossible in one person, and is a kind of literary curiosity or biological specimen, someone who has stepped out of the context of literature for a moment to visit with those who write the books about the writers. He may or may not be happy or comfortable there, he may or may not work there, either at teaching or writing, and his stay is always unpredictable even when he has been handed Tenure for life. Poets of course are even more unpredictable than other writers, overwhelmed as they are by the moment they inhabit and finding it difficult to connect yesterday with tomorrow. It is not that poets have bad habits in comparison with the better-behaved segments of society but that they tend not to have habits at all, and this is expected by the better-behaved segments of society who would be suspicious of a poet who sharpened his pencils before he sat down or who did push-ups at six every morning.

Characteristically the poet didn't know what to expect from his new job which carried the title of Associate Professor (with tenure) but was taken aback when he asked his Chairman what he was going to teach and the Chairman answered, you don't have to teach at all if you don't want to. This alarmed the poet and he took the answer to mean that he could invent his own courses. He wasn't, he knew, what is called a Poet or Writer in Residence and strangely he would never be offered that title, probably because he immediately set about constructing a course in modern poetry the way he had set about writing a verse essay he had written in the Army, by plotting it with outlines, by chronology and tendency and using history instead of philosophy as most of the real professors did, using biography as most of the professors didn't and emphasizing prosody above all, which had become anachronistic and which he hoped to revive somehow.

But it was all a mistake, he found, and almost at once discovered himself lost in a thicket of minor writers whose works and names had long been forgotten but which he believed he had to hack his way through before he got to the treasure. What's worse, he wrote the lectures out, in sentences, as he had never learned to lecture from notes and didn't trust himself to stick to the subject, and so wrote laborious essays which he then stood up and read, aware that this is the deadliest form of teaching, even if the lecturer is reading masterpieces off the

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page. He wrote what amounted to a book of essays about people like Austin Dobson and William Watson and Richard Le Gallienne, cursing himself for getting into this quagmire, while pipe-smoking graduate students dutifully took notes and he went home and wrote more such lectures as if deliberately avoiding the treasure which was lying all around in heaps and which he told himself he was saving until he got to the Twenties when everything happened at once and suddenly the whole sky was lit up with the new American poetry. He could find no good excuse for this pedantry unless it was a way of finding his road back to where he had left off before he was drafted, the road back that led him to Prosody, his secret love as it were, and if these all-but-worthless poets were nothing else they were at least prosodists and they would lead to a real prosodist like Robert Bridges (who was just another kind of milksop) but who would lead to Gerard Manley Hopkins who was a stallion under his Jesuit skirts, and the poet had before long written so many of these lectures beating around the bush that it was too late to pull out and he plowed on, boring himself to despair.

But there was another course, a seminar for writing poetry and fiction, which compensated for the lecture course, and he and his writing colleagues sat around for hours at night with the handful of aspiring poets and fictioners and real work was accomplished, the poet felt, and everything was rewritten twenty times and subjected to the frontline fire of equals and competitors, though the poet would take over and plead with them not to turn writing into a horse race, that there was nothing competitive between them because nobody could possibly write anyone else's lines and that if they were thinking of honoraria and emoluments they were barking up the wrong tree and they could worry about that when they were proofreading their first book. But he knew he was wrong and was talking like an Old Master because he had already won all those blue ribbons with one hand tied behind him and he ought to keep his mouth shut in front of these burning young men and women whose jealousies were perfectly natural and in fact necessary for them. You don't acquire wisdom without success, you can't afford it, and they were too young and unpublished to be wise and know-it-all like him and their eyes burned through him and in a way he envied them their novitiate and their smouldering and he remembered the happiness of the anguish and the centipede stings of rejection that sent him howling, as a great poet had put it, to his Muse.

The poet was happy to find that there was no social life at the university because there was no campus enclosure, no communitas as in most such establishments, and because this was Baltimore, where social meetings are highly important and are kept in the family, so to speak. In spite of its great liberal philosophy Hopkins was a cabal of snobbery of

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the worst kind, of local blue bloods who lived in blue-blooded sections of the city and the very university sat in the middle of the city where Jews, for instance, were then not allowed to buy or rent houses, so that the poet, when he pointed this out to the visiting poet Spender and his wife as they were being taxied to the campus to read his poems, was happy to hear the reaction of the British pair—how disgusting, they said, and the poet felt confused and wondered if he had been, for want of a better word, impolite.

He went to one dinner with his wife at the apartment of a leading Wordsworth scholar who lived in the sanctity of the pure neighborhood and they had to wear evening clothes to eat in the building's public dining room. The poet rented a tuxedo and wondered what Wordsworth would have thought of the proceedings and of the tall handsome bachelor professor of Wordsworth with silver buckles on his shoes or pumps, which the poet couldn't take his eyes off of.

There began the infighting about Creative Writing, the scholars who wanted to ditch the program, the ones who were friendly, and the writers themselves who had everything to lose, and battle lines were drawn. The poet's Chairman was a canny and clever politician, a whisperer as a good politician has to be, a keeper and purveyor of secrets, and the poet was aghast at the maneuvering, the phone calls, the lunches, the late-night calls, the hints he was supposed to be privy to and he felt hurt at what he believed was the general low behavior of everybody involved. He hated politicking and didn't understand it and wanted to get away.

He had been given an office, which he loved, in the tower—the Lantern as architects call it—of the not very old Georgian edifice, an unfinished room where there were not supposed to be offices or people, an attic room with a window that overlooked the campus and he was alone there, nobody knew where he was and he wrote poems, one about his anxiousness over being in a place where he didn't feel at home, where he felt an intruder, and his feelings about the internecine war began to alienate him from his position, the poet in the tower bit, and he felt he was on display in secret, that he was a rare book in the library and was being looked at through a glass showcase, even that he was the pawn that would win or lose the chess game between the old guard and the new guard, and he wanted to get away.

Men who had been his professors a few years ago were now his colleagues and the poet felt fraudulent, unprepared, he had no history of professorship, he had no schooling really, a smattering of history and Latin and the English poets he had read himself, a smattering of French, no German, no Italian, so that he went to the seminar of a famous Dante professor and bought the Grandegent edition and felt totally defeated by the cosmology and theology and the beautiful language he knew he

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would never learn. He would never even learn English, which was the greatest mystery of his life.

The Hiss Case broke, Hiss, the darling of Johns Hopkins, who was worshipped by all the professors and the chancellor and the deans and the blue bloods who wouldn't let Jews or cockroaches in their neighborhoods, and the poet followed the case and knew that Hiss was guilty as hell, as they all did but weren't about to throw their darling to the wolves. He even wrote to the accuser, a very unsavory Henry Luce character, and told him what he knew about two of the Communists mentioned in the testimony called variously and interchangeably Carpenter and Zimmerman who were both death-pale and pockmarked and wore long black overcoats and black homburg hats all the time even in the summer at the Communist bookstore on Eutaw Place. The accuser asked the poet to visit him but the poet would have no part of that, he was just shaking the hand of the unsavory accuser for smoking these bastards out.

He felt he had become a kind of focal point of infection. The Bollingen "Case" followed him, especially him because he was a victim of it, the Jew who wouldn't let it rest, who would fight it all his life as the last straw on his camel's back that broke his equanimity for good.

How something important happens is the business of historians and newspapers, the effect it has is the business of philosophers and writers and especially poets. Poetry makes nothing happen, a great poet had announced and this aphorism caused only a mild surprise among people who think that poetry ought to make something happen, especially in a land where results are taken more seriously than causes. But if poetry makes nothing happen, poets can make all hell break loose and in fact seem to have a penchant for it.

The Library of Congress is too tasty a dish to ignore and the poets who had been there began to taste of it. Why not, they thought, some of them thought, found a kind of Academy to direct the taste of this barbarous country and provide it with standards of excellence. ("Standards of excellence" was to become a political slogan shortly, borrowed from the poets perhaps who were discussing prizes more or less innocently.) Why not do something to counteract the Golden Albatross Prize, such as create a new Prize, a real one, not one donated by a journalist? So the poet thought they thought. Money of course is no problem for poets, in the first place because they don't have any and in the second place because they don't believe in it, this being the main reason why monied people shell out money for poets and artists, because the monied people can't believe that there are people who don't believe in money and keep holding it out to them the way scientists hold out cheese to rats. Of course the philanthropists rarely give money directly

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to poets and artists, nobody wants that kind of burden of responsibility, but they give away millions indirectly, inventing foundations with their names on the letterhead and their gold preserved for their families in the name of the foundations. Scholarships, fellowships, above all Prizes. The poets knew all this like the backs of their hands; some of them had the ear of persons so rich that they hid themselves in remote châteaux in remote countries and came home only for family funerals. The right poets had the keys to these kingdoms where they were more than welcome, where they were medicine for the hurt minds of the anxious very-rich who all felt like minor archdukes about to be shot at in a restaurant or in their cars without coats-of-arms. Very-rich had become perilous, it had always been perilous but now was more so, as everybody had a gun and an ideology. The right poets, the right painters, even the millionaire Communist artists were all balm to these worried monied heirs and heiresses and they would extend their largess to include them, not like a Mozart who was treated like a domestic and was sat below the salt but like family members or exiles from one of the old brocaded empires. Money was no problem.

The poets who had had the Consultantship formed themselves into a committee, then a fellowship and denominated themselves Fellows in American Letters of the Library of Congress, a windbag title like the Society of Cincinnatus which General Washington was attuned to before Thomas Jefferson put a stop to it as a potential hereditary officer corps, as this was to be in the same sense, a hereditary elite writers corps which would call the cultural shots.

The money came to the Fellows like a tame pigeon. The heir to the biggest aluminum fortune in the world who lived in Switzerland where he had been analyzed by Carl Jung on Lake Bollingen donated the money, as the poet believed, via T. S. Eliot, also analyzed by Jung, now the most famous poet in the civilized world, and Eliot, no longer an American, was made an honorary member of the new Fellowship of American Writers to donate the Prize to the Library of Congress, though non-American writers were not supposed to be members of the Fellows.

A meeting of the Fellows was called and the poet felt happy to visit the Library which he loved and to see the poets all in one room with its mellow golden Renaissance furniture and to see the great Eliot in the flesh, whose most famous poem he had arranged to be recorded on wax for posterity. The Prize was to be given for the best book of poetry of the year before and there were two candidates, William Carlos Williams's *Paterson* and *The Pisan Cantos* of Ezra Pound. The poet had read both and knew that the Williams poem was probably his best, anyhow his most ambitious work, and knew that the Pound *Cantos* were also his best although the whole thing had been sloppy and ill-conceived from

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decades back and was like one of those panaceas or Rube Goldberg machines that Americans patent because America is a land of cranks and crackpots who think that their invention is going to save the world, and Pound was sitting not far away in St. Elizabeth's Hospital under indictment for high treason to the United States for years of broadcasts for Mussolini and the Axis against the U.S. of A. with filthy Hitlerian diatribes against the Jews, and New York was Jew York and Roosevelt was Rosenveldt and kikery was the cause of everything wrong with the world and the Jews were even worse than niggery because they were and so forth and so on, and this was what *The Pisan Cantos* was primarily about except for Pound's self-pity for having been caught and put in a cage until he was sent back for his treason trial which would never take place because of the Bollingen Prize which of course he got and because of the cowardice of the people in the White House who weren't all that crazy about The People of the Book even if the Treasurer of the United States was a Jew which is why he was there.

They, the rest of the Fellows, the poet remembered had all gone to lunch together, or so he thought, because they all came in together, the best and most famed of poets and novelists of the time, while he was sitting on the windowsill looking at the Capitol across the way and musing about American architecture which always made him happy and sad at the same time, the silly marbly grandeur that was so obvious and common and dear to him like the playthings of peasants who have suddenly become rich and powerful and bewildered and are playing with blocks that are each ten tons of granite or Indiana limestone to play with and brag about.

Aiken, who had rented him his car, Auden, Louise Bogan, Eliot, Tate, Katherine Anne Porter, Robert Penn Warren, and the youngish Robert Lowell, sneering and shifty-eyed and sycophantic, and a half-dozen others took chairs and thought casually that the Prize should go to Pound and what did the poet, the Jew on the windowsill, think and he said yes and that was the end of the meeting. Allen Tate wandered over to him and said that that was a very Christian thing for him to do and Auden said about Pound that everybody is anti-Semitic some time, Auden who had a Jewish lover notoriously unfaithful and heartbreaking to the great poet and Louise Bogan spoke to the Jew on the windowsill and said she had been married to a Jew for twenty years but hadn't known he was. People got up, the poet got up and passed some words with T. S. Eliot about a study of Eliot he had just read by a nun that she called *Between Fixity and Flux* and they joked a little about nuns writing literary criticism, and the poet left.

At home he started to brood and feel sick and he drank whiskey, which his wife objected to on general principles, and he played with the

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two babies awhile and gradually began to feel horrified, began to feel that he had been tricked and made a fool of, began to feel a Judas which was what they wanted him to be, wasn't it, with the new Catholic convert Robert Lowell licking T. S. Eliot's boots and the new Anglican convert Auden licking his wounds over his Jewish lover, and giving the Prize to an Ezra Pound under indictment for high treason, he who had done more for Hitler than any English-speaking person in the world and who was holding seminars probably at this moment on the ward for the criminally insane, or whatever they called it, and who was going to be let out because he was a poet and it was all right for poets to favor gassing Jews because they said that poetry makes nothing happen. There would be a meeting of sorts next day before the press release went out—the Library of Congress put a lot of emphasis on press releases, in case Congress thought they were acting independently of them—and the poet knew what he had to do, what he should have done hours ago, stalked out or walked out of the room and never come back again. Never spoken to these poets again. He would do it tomorrow, knowing that from then on the door of their Establishment would be closed, or half-closed to him, in the same way that he would never be invited to their Clubs where things were decided once and for all and that from then on he would be considered just another refuser of their faith.

He went and changed his vote in favor of Williams, with a note that he could not endorse an anti-Semite for the Prize.

The newspapers were delighted with the outcome. Who could ever write an article about the stodgy Library of Congress, that hideous pile of freak architecture that collected Gutenberg Bibles and wasted the taxpayers' substance? Now here was something, a bunch of longhairs giving away what they called Government money to a fascist traitor who was about to be hanged, they hoped, and all led by T. S. Eliot, not even an American citizen but himself a traitor to the United States, and so forth and so on. Never mind that Eliot had won the Nobel Prize; there was dirty work afoot.

The Baltimore papers like all the newspapers made a story out of the Bollingen Prize. The poet began to be besieged. In some quarters he was a hero, a Jewish hero to the Jewish papers; in others he was a philistine, a bourgeois, a pinhead who didn't appreciate modern art.

He was visited by a strange movie-type self-styled Communist who telephoned first from Boston saying he wanted to interview the dissenter to publish an article in the *Saturday Review of Literature*. The poet hated people who declared Communist allegiance and was immediately suspicious that he wasn't any such thing and invited him to come. But first he decided to have a witness and he asked the Chairman if the interview could take place in the Chairman's office instead of his tower;

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he asked the Chairman to be there and just listen, pretend to be working. The poet was being O.S.S. He considered the *Saturday Review* a low form of literary journalism and wasn't about to lend his name to their brand of literary politics.

The Communist's costume was too good to be true. He wore a brown felt hat pulled down over one eye and a slovenly suit and he chomped on a fat smelly cigar which he never took out of his mouth and he talked cleverly and offhand about the Moscow Trials of the Thirties and the Hitler-Stalin Pact and what did the poet think of Henry Wallace and the Hiss case and he said he was commissioned by the *Saturday Review* to expose the fascist plot on Capitol Hill, those were his words, but of course the article would be based on this or future interviews. The poet answered that he didn't know of any fascist plots on Capitol Hill and that to invent one was not his affair, that he opposed the Prize as rotten judgment on the part of the jury and as some kind act of friendship for Pound or for poetry which was very misplaced and mistimed but that he wouldn't be a party to some generalized attack on the Library or the government because of this mistake.

The movie Communist left with the cigar in his mouth and the poet and his Chairman looked at each other and laughed briefly. The *Saturday Review* then engaged the Harvard poet-professor Robert Hillyer who detested modern poetry to do their bidding; he knew nothing about the shabby business but wrote fluently and at length.

It didn't surprise the poet that there were such people at Harvard or anywhere else in a famous institution. Part of him understood, sympathized with Hillyer, though he was furious with all the participants in this charade, Hillyer, the Communist with the fat cigar, the famous poets who were honoring the infamous *meshugena momzer,* as he called Pound, the Librarian of Congress who seemed pleased that Pound had won their goddam prize, the filthy newspapers with their carefully calculated misunderstandings of something so dreadful, the Jews who congratulated him on his "stand," for he didn't have a "stand" but felt like Whitman who said I am neither for nor against Institutions, furious with the heir to all the aluminum dollars in the world sitting beside Lake Bollingen with the great counter-Freudian named Jung and probably slightly embarrassed that he had stirred up such an unpleasantness, for the heirs to billions are apt to be very shy, unless they take the bull by the horns and go into politics.

Now the poet was invited to Harvard to deliver, to compose and deliver the Phi Beta Kappa poem and to read it at the annual meeting of the Alpha of Massachusetts Chapter at Harvard, and he set about writing a longish academic Yeatsian poem about teaching "creative writing" really. It was a good dull poem, just right for the occasion and he walked

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in a small procession by the side of the President of the school who didn't seem to know he was there, the poet in a black hot heavy suit like an undertaker—he would never know what to put on—in the sweltering Cambridge weather, and he read his poem to polite applause and sat through a raging Phi Beta Kappa oration by Zechariah Chafee, a Harvard firebrand. He stayed with his friend Matthiessen at his elegant apartment in elegant Louisburg Square and slept on the sofa and the next day returned to Baltimore, his home, his job, his unsettled mind. He already felt both wanted and out-of-place, somehow fraudulent, and peaceless like an animal tortured by boys. If there was a chance to leave he would leave—to go where?

Community Hospital

Even the morning is redundant now.
He lays a rosary on the pillowcase
So that the last thing that his father will know
Won't be the Yogi Bear cartoon next door.
The self-importance each fought the other for
At the expense of love, comes down to this:
He shaves the not-so-strange, unconscious face
Absurdly, in case there is a visitor;
And from ice water, crooks a plastic straw
To the slack mouth, in hopes that he might draw.

At the Family Plot

Amazing, underneath this flowering tree,
Timothy Dekin (1943–)
The conversation blurring, far off. Me.

TIMOTHY DEKIN

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The Education of an Engineer

SAMUEL C. FLORMAN

"I became an engineer."

Thus begins John Hersey's novel *A Single Pebble*, in which the protagonist travels to pre-revolutionary China seeking a site for a dam along the Yangtze River. As he encounters a civilization little changed since the Middle Ages, the young man finds his faith in technology giving way to awe and self-doubt. I, too, became an engineer and have spent a number of years thinking about, as well as practicing, this much-misunderstood profession, albeit in less dramatic settings than the chasms of the Yangtze, and with less discouraging conclusions than Mr. Hersey's.

How does one decide to become an engineer? Studies made a generation ago indicate that it used to be the quest for "interesting work." According to what I hear today, employment opportunities are what count. Doubtless both motives pertain, with the less lofty one having recently come to the fore.

I made the decision in 1942 during my senior year at the Fieldston School, a sylvan campus in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, forty-five minutes by subway from where I lived in Manhattan. The idea had occurred to me earlier—especially during several visits to the 1939 World's Fair—but I was far from the stereotypical engineer. I did not, for example, build radios, assemble models, or fiddle with car engines. Like my fellow students at Fieldston, I read a lot of books and wrote a lot of papers. My favorite subject by far was English, particularly a senior seminar in which we reviewed great Western literature from Aeschylus to Joyce. Nevertheless, I did my best work in mathematics and was gently urged by several teachers to consider a career in science.

There were no two cultures in those days. I can recall no division between students of different sorts of talents, but rather a mutual respect and a shared appreciation of achievement. If this sounds idyllic, well, it was. Which is not to say that we lived in a state of constant elation—we were teenagers, after all—but, academically, the place was heaven. We knew that we would follow many different career paths; the world seemed wonderfully open and full of possibilities—in the arts, the sciences, and the professions. Business, however, we regarded with a scorn compounded of intellectual elitism and post-1930s radicalism. Ironically, the fathers who paid our not inconsiderable tuition were mostly hardworking small businessmen. Of the acceptable careers, science, medicine, and engineering were considered more or less on a par with law, journalism, and the arts. Excellence is what counted; our class had an abundance of it, and our expectations were high. We were not surprised in later years when Roger Lazarus, the most accomplished student, studied physics at Harvard, got his doctorate there, and ended up at Los Alamos, any more than we were when Joe Kraft, president of the student council, became a nationally syndicated newspaper columnist, often called a pundit. We were a class full of potential pundits.

Although I wanted my life's work to be creative and stimulating, I was not totally oblivious to money. A part of my depression-bred consciousness was concerned about someday being able to support a family. For all the appeal of mathematics and physics, it

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wasn't clear to me how one made a living in those fields. This was even more true of writing and the arts. Business, as I have said, was out of the question, and as for medicine, needles made me queasy. So I chose engineering. Engineers, from the little I knew, studied science and used their brains. They also got jobs and earned salaries—and, after a fashion, they were cultural heroes. The newsreels that I saw every weekend, between two movies at Loew's 83rd Street, often featured the dedication of a new TVA dam or some other impressive public work. There was much cutting of ribbons and drinking of toasts, each event celebrating a counter-attack against rural dust bowls or urban slums. When the movies themselves depicted engineers—usually in the B films, to be sure—they were stalwart men in high-laced boots engaged in heroic endeavors, such as building railroads or prospecting for oil. Intellectually challenging, financially sensible, and withal a touch of romance and adventure—engineering seemed an ideal calling.

I had never heard it suggested that engineers were lower-middle-class, eccentric, or uncultivated (today I believe the epithet is "nerd"), and it did not occur to me that anybody held such opinions. The only sour note was sounded by an uncle who observed that instead of wanting to *be* an engineer I should aim to be someone who *hires* engineers, thus implying that I was about to join an exploitable sub-class. The remark enraged my father, who had no clear idea of what engineers do but was proud to have a son about to enter a profession.

When it came time to select a college, I naturally thought about M.I.T. Two of my engineering-bound classmates, including my best friend, went to that distinguished institution and never regretted their choice. But something about the huge labyrinth of laboratories made my heart sink, and still does in spite of all the good things I know about the place. Instead, I chose Dartmouth College, whose beautiful New Hampshire campus captured my fancy. I was also concerned about something called "college spirit" and impressed by the mystique of the Ivy League. Quaint and embarrassing as this seems in retrospect, I confess that traces of these feelings remain with me today.

I had only the vaguest idea of how one went about getting an engineering education. According to the Dartmouth catalog, I would "go to college," earn a bachelor of arts degree while majoring in the sciences, then pursue an engineering degree in graduate school. This is how General Sylvanus Thayer thought it ought to be when in 1867 he gave Dartmouth forty thousand dollars for the purpose of establishing the Thayer School of Engineering. As superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy from 1817 to 1833, the general had overseen the development of that institution into a distinguished school of applied science, and in his later years he decided to endow a graduate school of engineering at a liberal arts college. He believed that before embarking upon professional training one ought to become "a gentleman." The Thayer School's two-year program originally was designed to follow after a full four-year undergraduate education, although in 1893 a five-year program was devised that combines the senior year of college with the first year of engineering school. That five-year program endures to this day.

In most of the nation, however, engineering education evolved along different lines. The technical institutes, and later the land-grant colleges, developed four-year programs that carried students directly from high school into engineering studies. This effectively did away with the concept of a liberally educated engineer, although the accrediting arm of the profession eventually required that an engineering curriculum have a minimum 12.5 percent liberal component.

Of all this I was blissfully unaware as I arrived in Hanover, New Hampshire, in July of 1942. (A year-round program had been instituted because of the war.) I embarked on a typical course of study: English literature and French, sociology and economics, psychology and political science. As a pre-engineering student, I also took mathematics, physics, and chemistry, and two other subjects—then required but long since discarded—graphics and surveying. I will not argue that these courses deserved to maintain their place in higher education, but I recall vividly the delights of T-square, triangle, and India ink, and the thrill of carrying a transit through the autumn woods. These sorties into the tangible world, combined with the abstract fancies of mathematics and the sciences,

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reinforced my conviction that I was headed toward the best of all possible careers.

I was barely into my sophomore year when, almost imperceptibly, I began to undergo a metamorphosis. As if under a spell, I became increasingly absorbed in my technical, pre-professional studies. Looking back, I find it difficult to explain what happened, although, since the experience is undergone each year by many of the more than one hundred thousand Americans who enter engineering, how extraordinary can it be? What I do know is that the liberal arts began to pale and seem trivial, even annoying. Mathematical formulas took on the quality of fun-filled games, and the physical world became an enchanted kingdom whose every secret seemed worth exploring. I began to think exclusively of how courses would help me become a better engineer, more thoroughly grounded in the sciences, more perceptive and quick-witted, and—let us face facts—more desirable to some future employer. Despite the educational advantages I had enjoyed in high school, and notwithstanding the proclaimed policy of the liberal arts college I was attending, I came down with a bad case of vocationalism. I lost interest in becoming an educated person—the "gentleman" envisioned by Sylvanus Thayer. I wanted to become an engineer.

Could an inspiring humanities professor have prevented this from happening? I like to think so. Surely the situation was not helped by a freshman English course devoted to the painstaking dissection of *Lord Jim*, or by the introductory social science courses, which were informative but deadly dull. More exciting teachers and better planned classes might have made the difference, but it is common knowledge that when one is embarked on an affair of the heart, the most prudent counsel, even skillfully presented, often falls on deaf ears. And there can be no doubt but that my feeling about engineering was not altogether different from falling in love.

As it happened, my most exciting professors were mathematicians. I recall winning a prize in a mathematics competition—second prize, to be exact—and being invited along with the other winners to dinner at the home of the department head. After dining, we sat in the living room sipping brandy and listening to recordings of Mozart sonatas. Although at the time my musical taste ran more to Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw, I found the experience extremely agreeable. I associated my euphoria with the delights of mathematics, not giving adequate credit, I now believe, to Mozart and the winning of prizes, to say nothing of brandy.

Along with my commitment to mathematics and science, I developed a taste for free-time activities that I can only characterize as anti-intellectual. My pre-engineering fellows and I spent our leisure hours attending movies and sporting events. Occasionally we hitchhiked to Smith College and looked for girls. When lectures, concerts, and plays were offered on campus, it seemed natural that they be attended by other students, those strange young men who had decided to major in history, philosophy, or literature. One of my dormitory mates was enrolled in a special course with Robert Frost, who was at the time poet in residence at Dartmouth. Several times my friend invited me to join him for an evening of readings and discussion with the noted poet, but I was always too busy writing up my laboratory experiments or else committed to a party at some local tavern. Today I cannot believe—*simply cannot believe*—that I never even saw Robert Frost, much less spent an evening with him when I had the chance.

Shortly after entering college, I had enlisted in the Navy V-12 program on campus. At the end of each term, a period of uncertainty set in while we recruits waited to hear what the government had planned for us. After a year, we were called to active duty, but this merely meant putting on a uniform and learning how to march in formation. Those of us who were heading for engineering were encouraged to continue with our studies. After twenty-four months of non-stop schooling, I had accumulated the equivalent of three years of credits and was ready to enter the professional phase of my education.

I had by this time resolved to become a "civil" engineer. The term was coined in mid-eighteenth-century England by John Smeaton, builder of the Eddystone lighthouse. He used the term *civil* to demonstrate that his work had no military implication, which is ironic in that most military engineers subsequently have been trained in civil engineering. Civil engineers design and construct buildings,

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dams, bridges, towers, docks, tunnels—structures of all sorts. Civil engineering also encompasses highways, railroads, and airports, along with water supply and sewage disposal. In short, civil engineering is basic and of the earth—historically, along with mining, the root of all engineering. In the eighteenth century the development of the steam engine led to a new specialty called mechanical engineering, and each major technological advance has brought with it a fresh division of the profession: electrical, chemical, aeronautical, petroleum, computer, and so forth. I make this digression into the self-evident only because so many otherwise well-informed people keep asking me what it is that engineers *do*. Every technological product has to be designed and its manufacture overseen, and that is what engineers do. They occupy the vast middle spectrum between theoretical scientists and sub-professional technicians.

Buildings are usually planned by architects, but engineers design the structural and mechanical components within them, and civil engineers often oversee the actual construction process. These overseers are sometimes called construction engineers, and this is what I have become—more of a business manager, I suppose, than a creative spirit, more of a master builder than a man of science, yet still a member of the engineering family.

I have long forgotten most of the theorems that I learned in engineering school, but I recall vividly the nature, the "feel" of that learning. Like all engineers, I took basic courses in electricity, fluid mechanics, metallurgy, and thermodynamics (the study of heat and energy, particularly the workings of internal combustion engines, air conditioners, and the like). As a civil engineer, I took a series of courses in "structures," learning how to design beams, walls, slabs, and trusses. Then there were the more specialized studies: highways, water supply, and sanitation. In all of this there was a good amount of hands-on work. We poured concrete, cured it, and tested it to failure, analyzed the behavior of water in pipes and weirs, and experimented with a variety of motors and generators. Occasionally we ventured out into the field, visiting construction jobs and sewage treatment plants, or—a great favorite—measuring the flow of a river while perched above it in a tiny hand-operated cable car. The theoretical work was difficult—some of it exceedingly so—but the physical *doing* made it seem worthwhile.

Nowadays engineering education is much more scientific than it used to be. In addition to the subjects that were taught in the 1940s, a contemporary curriculum will include computing and information processing, probability and statistics, systems, optimization, and control theory, even system dynamics (policy design and analysis based on feedback principles and computer simulation). Much of the so-called shop work has fallen by the wayside, relegated to students who take two-year technician courses or four-year technology programs. The change came about in the 1950s, particularly in the aftershock of Sputnik when the quality of American science and engineering was called into question. Also, the growth of new disciplines means that there is simply more material to learn and so less time for knocking about in overalls and muddy boots. This has been inevitable, appropriate, and a darned shame.

In the spring of 1945, the Navy decided to call in my debt, so to speak, and I was ordered to officers' training school. After a few weeks of shooting guns, large and small, and studying semaphore code and naval etiquette, I was commissioned an ensign in the Civil Engineer Corps and sent to serve with the Seabees. I arrived in the Philippines just as the war was ending and went with the Twenty-ninth Construction Battalion to occupy Truk, an atoll in the Caroline Islands that had been bypassed during the westward move across the Pacific.

It was a pleasant enough life for a young would-be engineer. During the day we worked on construction projects, repaving the airstrip with fresh coral dredged from the sea, erecting Quonset huts, and building roads and a water supply system. In the evenings we drank beer, played cards, and talked—mostly about our work, baseball, and girls. Also—and I could not remember this happening since early childhood—I found myself with long periods of spare time. As the tropical sun sank into the sea behind implausible palm trees, it was impossible not to become introspective.

Among myths of self-discovery and inner change, life on a desert island has an honored place. It helps, of course, if the island has a supply of books. Our battalion had a library of sorts, stocked with those chunky, squarish

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paperbacks printed especially for the armed forces. To pass the time, I started to read again. At first my reading was purely recreational: the mysteries of Erle Stanley Gardner, the historical novels of Thomas Costain and Samuel Shellabarger, the best-sellers of Lloyd Douglas and Irving Stone, and the outlandish burlesques of Max Shulman and H. Allen Smith. I had forgotten how much fun books could be, even ordinary unprepossessing ones. Besides contemporary reprints, our island library held a number of Modern Library classics, and to these I turned next. One evening I started to read *Crime and Punishment*. It was as if I had stepped through a looking glass and found myself back in my high-school English seminar. Here once again were supercharged words and ideas and people and passions and questions of justice and the meaning of life.

It was like high school again and yet different because, though I was only four years older, I felt forty years more mature. According to a remark one hears time and again at engineering conferences, during their first ten years out of college, engineers wish that they had taken more technical courses; for the next decade they wish they had studied more business and economics; thereafter they regret that they had not delved more deeply into literature, history, and philosophy. On a Pacific island, thousands of miles from what we call civilization, the decades condense and the urge for meaning wells up in a young engineer as if he were at the peak of his career. At least this is what happened to me as I read *Crime and Punishment*, then *Madame Bovary*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Fathers and Sons*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and other works I cannot now recall.

I did not discuss with my fellow officers the books that I read and the thoughts that these books engendered. During the day, as the bulldozers roared and dust clouds rose, I immersed myself in the work as if nothing had changed, and in the evenings I idly chatted and joked like one of the guys. But I began to wonder why we engineers, as a group, seemed to live in a world so far removed, intellectually and emotionally, from the ferment I was rediscovering in literature.

The only officer in the battalion who was not an engineer was the chaplain. One night he joined several of us in a game of cards. Between hands the conversation droned on in the usual way, which, as I have said, meant anecdotes about our work, the current baseball season, and girls. The chaplain tried to interject some thoughts about the United Nations and prospects for international order. We did not respond. He then tried other topics: the morality of nuclear weapons, the ethical responsibility of war criminals, the role of religion in the post-war world, and so forth, but each time we returned to our trivia. Finally the chaplain slammed his cards down on the table, looked upward, and said in a loud voice, "Dear Lord, I know that I am unworthy, I confess that I have sinned, but why did you have to abandon me on this island with nobody for company but these boring engineers?"

I cannot say that from that moment on my life was totally changed, but it was an epiphany of sorts, a moment that I have never forgotten. I do not, needless to say, advocate wars or even universal military service, but there is much to be said for a forced interruption in a professional career. Every young engineer (or doctor or physicist or lawyer) would, I am convinced, benefit from a year on a desert island. The island should be well stocked with books and, ideally, should include among its inhabitants at least one outspoken chaplain.

When I returned to New York in the summer of 1946, I intended to look for a job. I had, after all, received a degree from Dartmouth and was entitled to call myself an engineer. (It was not until a few years later that I took the examinations necessary to acquire a state professional engineer's license, but that document is not a prerequisite for practice except in special circumstances, and less than half of American engineers ever bother to get one.) Many of my friends, however, were returning to school to resume educations that had been interrupted by the war, and this tended to make me feel that I was still properly a student. Besides, I was only twenty-one years old, the G.I. Bill of Rights enticingly offered free tuition, and the hunger for books that had been aroused during my stay in the Pacific was far from satisfied. I thought things over for a few weeks, then impetuously one September morning I took a bus uptown to Columbia University and signed up for a master's program in English literature. My par-

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ents reacted to this as if I were manifesting some form of battle fatigue—without having been in a battle. They were only partly placated by my assurances that I still planned to earn my livelihood as an engineer. The people at Columbia were likewise bemused. With only two semesters of English to my credit (and freshman English at that), I was surely the least qualified candidate ever to knock at their door. But my intentions appeared honorable, and the mood of the day favored giving veterans a break.

I enrolled in four courses: American Literature Since 1870, taught by Lionel Trilling; Modern Drama, taught by Joseph Wood Krutch; the History of the English Novel, taught by a professor whose name I do not recall; and the Romantic Movement, taught by a professor whose name I do recall but will not record since he read his lectures in a monotone and almost managed to make Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats seem lifeless. Aside from this one bad choice—for which I compensated by monitoring an undergraduate course in the Age of Reason—I found the classes altogether absorbing. I remember with delight not only the lectures and the books we read, but also the arguments and small storms that were constantly erupting. When Trilling announced in class one day that Henry James was a far greater novelist than John Steinbeck, and that anybody who didn't think so ought to reconsider his plans to teach English for a livelihood (most of my classmates were budding academics), the booing was loud and raucous. On the other hand, when Trilling entered the classroom after having testified in court on behalf of Edmund Wilson's *Memoirs of Hecate County*—which, strange as it may seem today, was almost proscribed for being pornographic—he was greeted with a standing ovation. When Krutch argued on behalf of trusting one's own judgment instead of kowtowing to so-called literary authorities, he was challenged by a student who said individual taste was suspect since "even monkeys know what they like"; to which Krutch replied, after a moment's thought, "I guess I prefer an honest monkey to a dishonest student." On another occasion, Krutch pointed to a political demonstration taking place on campus within view of the classroom window. "Who here," he asked, "believes that there is a radical solution to the discontents of mankind?" There then ensued a political debate, followed by a discussion of the tragic view of life. This was totally different from anything I had ever experienced in an engineering classrooom.

The entire campus seethed with excitement, and I hardly knew where to look first. When Jacques Barzun was scheduled to lecture to the freshman Contemporary Civilization class, I wangled my way into the hall. A friend of mine recommended the music appreciation classes of the noted composer Douglas Moore, so when I was in the mood—which was often—I dropped in. It was a small class where I could hardly pass unnoticed, but Mr. Moore was a gentle man who said I was welcome. To this day, I remember how he analyzed with us the final movement of Mozart's Forty-first Symphony, the four themes intertwining in heavenly combinations. Paul Henry Lang, a well-known musicologist and critic, was also on the faculty, and for a while I added one of his classes to my schedule. One day Lang confessed that he had begun to write a book on the aesthetic theory of opera only to give it up in dismay. Opera was beautiful and soul-stirring, he said, but its formal rules were undefinable. It simply is what it is. This is the way I felt about my experience at Columbia. I was no closer to Truth than I had ever been, but the overall experience was as thrilling as a Verdi duet.

In the evenings, after I had finished the required reading in Dickens, Ibsen, and Faulkner, I turned hungrily to the classics of earlier times, Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, and then, for a nightcap, I read the *Partisan Review*, where I expected to learn what the heavy thinkers of the day were up to. On social outings, I started frequenting Carnegie Hall instead of the Fifty-second Street jazz joints that had previously been my haunts. About the only habit not affected by my galloping intellectualism was the way I approached the *New York Times* on Sunday: I still started with the sports section—as I do to this day.

In order to qualify for a master's degree, I was required to write a thesis. I resolved to pick a topic that was all-embracing, no hidden facet of some obscure author, but something "hot" that would reveal to me the essence of the contemporary cultural scene. With some trepidation, but determined to seek advice

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from the highest possible source, I took the problem to Lionel Trilling. He was not enchanted by my idea, saying that it lacked subtlety, but then, on second thought, the question seemed to amuse him. After a moment's reflection, he suggested Franz Kafka. Kafka was culturally hot, he said, and getting hotter. This idea presented two problems: first, I had never read Kafka and had scarcely heard of him; second, and more serious, my selected area of interest—to which my thesis had to relate—was American literature. Well, said Trilling, why not American criticism of Franz Kafka? Why not, indeed? It was an inspired choice, for not only did I immerse myself in the anguished fantasies of this quintessential twentieth-century writer, but in tracking down his reviewers I came face to face with Marxism, Freudianism, existentialism, and all the other *-isms* of the day. This excursion into the world of literary criticism showed me that intellectuals can be as petty, inconsistent, and plain foolish as anybody else, a fact that an awestruck student of literature—and that is what I was—tends to overlook.

I had anticipated that the thesis would be a chore, but it turned out to be hard work, which is different and better. I enjoyed the research, delighted in the reading, and much to my surprise, relished the writing. I don't suppose that anybody has read that thesis, or ever will, other than the kindly assistant professor whose job it was to do so, but a more rewarding task I have never undertaken. At times I found myself beginning to envy the men and women whose life's work is reading, researching, writing, and teaching, who traffic in words and ideas instead of goods.

Yet, when the academic year ended, I said farewell to the campus on Morningside Heights in much the same way one leaves an enchanting foreign land to return home. It never occurred to me that I might stay, become a scholar, and change the direction of my life. For one thing, it was high time to start earning money. I was committed to engineering; I was trained, and deep down I believed that I was better suited to building than to reading and writing. In fact, deep down I had concluded that the main business of humankind was to build, to be technologically creative. Literature, I felt in my bourgeois heart of hearts, is commentary upon life, while engineering is the very stuff of life itself. What was the meaning of all those great novels except to explore the ways in which people work, trade, farm, war, earn, spend, cooperate, and compete? (Also love and hate and create art, to be sure, but only within the framework of an economically workable society.) What was the bitter joke with which Kafka wrestled during his short, sad life except that the state of grace that ever eludes the artist is found in the daily round of ordinary affairs? The protagonist of *The Castle*, after all, seeks confirmation of his appointment as land surveyor. And does not Goethe's Faust in the end find salvation in a land-reclamation project?

Much as I was enchanted with literature and the life of the mind, I had come to resent the condescending attitude that some intellectuals had toward so-called "materialism" and the technological impulse. It was all very well for Plato to say that thinking is better than doing, but this seems ironic when one considers that the glory of Athens rested upon the marvels of Greek mining, farming, seamanship, and weaponry—that is, upon Greek technology. My affection lay with Homer, whose world was rich with the feel of metals, woods, and fabrics, and whose robust characters took delight in buildings and ships, in objects designed, manufactured, used, given, admired, and savored.

Shortly after leaving Columbia, I began my first honest-to-goodness job as aide and lackey to a house builder on Long Island. I could not consider the work exalted, professionally speaking, but when I started to measure and calculate, set up my transit and wave directions to the backhoe operator, I knew that I was in a place where I belonged. Eventually my career took me into an office, and today I visit construction sites less often than I would like. But, when the cranes lift steel beams to dizzying heights, or when the wet concrete flows into huge wooden forms as the laborers yell and bang their shovels against the chutes, I say to myself, as Robert Louis Stevenson did when he came upon a scene of railroad construction on the western American plains, "If it be romance, if it be contrast, if it be heroism we require, what was Troy to this?"

I have had no reason to regret the choice of career I made, somewhat cavalierly, in high school. If life has not been one grand adventure interspersed with ribbon-cutting ceremo-

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nies, as shown on the screen in Loew's Eighty-third Street, well, life isn't the movies. Engineering provides its own rewards. I have a special affection for civil engineering, although I recognize the appeal of the other branches of the profession and vicariously enjoy the work of my more "scientific" fellows—for example, those along the frontiers of electronics.

Yet, for all the satisfactions inherent in my work, I thank the fates that I had time with the humanities and that I do not, like so many engineers in mid-career, lament lost opportunities. Mark Van Doren overstated the case, but not by much, when he wrote of the happiness that comes to the student of the liberal arts:

> That happiness consists in the possession of his own powers, and in the sense that he has done all he could to avoid the bewilderment of one who suspects he has missed the main thing. There is no happiness like this.

No one person can be all things at once. It is unrealistic to expect engineers to be artists or poets or literary scholars, and vice versa. Civilization flourishes because specialists rely upon one another to perform particular tasks. By nature and inclination, engineers are different from poets and artists. Having said that, I still think it regrettable that Sylvanus Thayer's ideal of a liberally educated engineering profession is so far from being realized.

The Thayer School at Dartmouth is today the only American institution that requires engineers to invest at least five years in their education and to qualify for a bachelor of arts degree to boot. A number of other schools, Columbia among them, used to make the same demands but have succumbed to the economic competition. The five-year program is still widely available as an option, but little used. The average young person is reluctant to do in five years what can be achieved in four. The "progressive" schools require a 20 percent liberal component in an engineering education, and the "traditional" schools go along with the minimum 12.5 percent required for accreditation. Because most large universities fall into the latter category, the average engineering student takes only six nontechnical courses during his four years of college; and, since most of these courses are liable to be selected in the "useful" social sciences, an engineer can enter professional life having taken only one or two college courses in the humanities. In other words, the typical American engineer is a high-school graduate with four years of mostly technical training. (About a quarter of these students go on for graduate courses in their specialty.) While Sylvanus Thayer's dream has thus turned to ashes, other Americans have been going to college in ever-increasing numbers. This means that engineers, compared to their fellow citizens, are less educated—less cultured, if you will—than ever before. This is so in spite of the fact that engineering students are smarter than their fellows, as measured by S.A.T. scores, verbal as well as mathematical.

The historical origins of engineering lie in simple craftsmanship. When engineering is looked at in this light, any college education at all can be considered an improvement. But there is another engineering tradition that verges on patrician. John Augustus Roebling, designer of the Brooklyn Bridge and student of Hegel, wrote in his spare time a work entitled "The Harmonies of Creation." Charles Steinmetz, a genius from the early days of electrical engineering and an ardent socialist, was a strong advocate of liberal education for engineers. Herbert Hoover, a mining engineer who became the thirty-first president, was a scholar who not only wrote several books but also translated Agricola from the Latin.

This noble heritage of engineering has withered and is all but moribund. According to historian David F. Noble, author of *America by Design*, the decline started after World War I when engineering educators "sold out" to American industry and agreed to furnish sub-professional graduates to fill specific job slots. I see no reason to characterize what happened in terms of malice or capitulation. The nation needed technically trained personnel, and there were thousands of young people in whom the technological impulse swelled up like a passion. I have related how I myself was overcome by the feeling—or, let us say, the infatuation. Educators were caught in the middle. Today, with the nation fearful of the Soviets, intimidated by the Japanese, and mesmerized by computers, the pressures toward vocationalism are increasingly intense.

Yet I cannot believe that the current situ-

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ation benefits either engineering students or the nation. Everyone agrees that most engineers are unable to write decent prose. Since communication is essential to successful engineering (a recent study found that a group of Exxon research and development engineers spend one-third of their time writing reports), it is clear that engineering students should be studying college-level English. As for working together with people, which engineers must do to be effective, literature and history could surely provide much-needed knowledge and understanding. I say this out of the depths of my own experience.

It is also widely agreed that American technological products would be "better" if engineers were more "sensitive"—aesthetically, morally, and socially. People who voice this opinion often have confused ideas about how technology is shaped and directed; they give engineers too much credit (and blame) and society as a whole not nearly enough. Nevertheless, a cadre of truly civilized engineers could not help but contribute to a more satisfactory technology.

It is also likely, though difficult to prove, that immersion in the humanities can invigorate the imaginative faculties and make an engineer more able and creative. Nikola Tesla, for example, said that his invention of the polyphase system and the a.c. induction motor came in a flash of insight as he was walking with a friend and reciting Goethe: "Oh, that spiritual wings soaring so easily / Had companions to lift me bodily from earth." "In an instant I saw it all," relates Tesla. What he saw was a motor without brushes and commutator, turned by a rotating magnetic field. In physics, Niels Bohr said that he arrived at the concept of complementarity by speculating on the ancient theological dilemma of the impossibility of reconciling perfect love with perfect justice. Lewis Mumford has pointed out that people flew in dreams and communicated instantaneously in myths and fairy tales long before they achieved the technical apparatus for doing so.

For all these reasons, and many more, engineers should be studying the liberal arts. This is no luminous insight of my own, but only what is generally conceded when, every few years, committees are formed to study engineering education. Yet the economic realities prevail. Within the confines of a four-year program, it is argued, there is simply not enough time. Add to this the inertia of university administrations and the uninterest, verging on hostility, of students, and the possibility of improvement seems remote. In political terms, there simply is no constituency for change. Many people agree that the four-year program should be lengthened to five, but it appears that it is now too late to make that change—or too early. For the moment, at least, the chill at the heart of engineering education is deepening. The situation brings to mind the oft-quoted statement by Franz Kafka: "A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us."

Kafka reportedly was much impressed by an anecdote about Gustave Flaubert, who once spent a day in the country visiting a jolly, robust family wholly without intellectual pretentions. On his way home, the great novelist, who had sacrificed his life to his art, kept thinking of these simple folk with their simple pleasures, and he muttered over and over, "*Ils sont dans le vrai!*" To be in the right, or to follow the true way, is the aim of each of us, and the tragic fact is that by choosing one path we relinquish the opportunity to travel others that are of great interest and charm. But different sorts of paths can cross or run side by side for a while; this is one of life's most pleasant surprises.

Ah, well, nobody is more tiresome than a reformed sinner, and that, I suppose, is what I have become. Occasionally I try to sell my brand of salvation to young engineers, but I do not delude myself about the extent of my success. If I try to speak of my own experience, some smart whippersnapper will tell me what I know only too well, that my education was something of a fluke. Not every engineer can go to a fine private high school and a liberal arts college, then spend a year on an island in the Pacific, followed by another year studying the humanities at government expense.

Yet, who can predict the future? When the current frenzy over computers and technical training has run its course, the inevitable counter-reaction will set in. Engineers, being bright, curious, and pragmatic, may well conceive new patterns for their education and careers. Perhaps women, who are just beginning to enter engineering in large numbers, will show the way. I read recently that, in the Soviet Union, female engineers devote three

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times as much of their leisure time to "humanitarian and artistic activities" as do their male colleagues.

Enough of speculation. There are buildings to be built and things I should be doing at the office. Samuel Johnson—whom I learned to love at Columbia in 1947 and who, in truth, was more an engineer's kind of man than Franz Kafka—once said in a letter to Boswell: "Life is not long, and too much of it must not pass in idle deliberation how it shall be spent."

The Well at Mohenjodaro

(2500 B.C.)

SHUJA NAWAZ

Nothing but half-bricks and pebbles
Deep down in its dark cold heart,
Thrown by thirsty men to measure
The water's depth, till none remains.
Wet fingers grope through the soil
When cleaning time comes round again
And the aortic surge resumes.
The well stares at the sky
With an unblinking Cyclopean eye.
Five thousand years and a million
Buckets of memories poured into
The souls and soil of Mohenjodaro
Whose death has built a name.
The tourist wrapped in his sweat
Stops and looks, cold drink in hand,
Bends down, lifts and lazily lobs
One more stone into the well.
The falling message wakens echoes
That are added to the laden air.

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Bookstores, Communist and Capitalist

JACK PERRY

After two years in Bulgaria, where I was American ambassador, we had returned for summer home leave. My wife and I had been in the foreign service for over twenty years, so the excitement of the periodic return—seeing your own country through fresh eyes—was familiar. This time back, for some reason, my focus, the viewing glass through which I peered at the familiarly strange, was bookstores. A seasoned browser and occasional buyer in bookstores of all stripes, I had now added Bulgarian bookstores to my inventory. Coming back to the glitter of my own country's bookstores, one foot in America and one still in Europe, I asked myself the question: Is a good bookstore essential to a good life?

We had left New York in early October two years before. This was to be our third go at a Communist country—we had served in Moscow in the sixties and Prague in the seventies—so we knew to stock up on books. One of our last, affectionate stops was Scribner's on Fifth Avenue. A comforting place at any time, Scribner's offered especial appeal to a family bound for a land of censorship and universal propaganda. The bookstore's old wood, its high ceiling, the feel of the leather volumes, the publishing history that seemed to emanate from the premises—not to speak of the basic offering, heaps of good books for sale—made us feel at home, convinced us that literature was alive, and left us with the uplifting feeling that this was, after all, a world of choice. We boarded the plane for Sofia with a good many heavy books and a hope that civilization might endure.

The happy precincts of Scribner's had come often to mind during the two years in Bulgaria. Sofia had nothing approaching it, of course. We were prepared, as old East European hands, for the lack of a free press—or, more accurately, as prepared as an American can be, which is not too prepared after all. I was a journalist before I became a diplomat, and it is particularly saddening to me to see people picking forlornly at newspapers looking for scraps of news on the bare bones of propaganda. We became reacquainted with this phenomenon in Sofia, and it brought back memories of unhappy park benches in Leningrad and Prague and Kiev. We also rediscovered the official bookstores, as we had known them in Russia and Czechoslovakia, with their long shelves of Marx and Lenin and other old masters, their piling up of propaganda classics, their sterile sameness. These stores were familiarly depressing. No rivals to Scribner's here.

Yet bookstores are, by their nature, relatively lively places, and so they were even in Bulgaria—which, by the way, we had found to be quite a pleasant Balkan retreat. Bulgaria was small (shy of nine million), with, in the main, a relatively young literature (independence from Ottoman rule came only in 1878, after all); but it proved to be an extremely literate country with an active and well-supported literary establishment. Bulgarians, we found, were like the Russians in having a positive hunger for new books. Bulgarian bookstores were popular spots, so much so that often there were long lines outside, with customers waiting patiently to be admitted, a few at a time—and this in a country where lines were relatively rare, for Eastern Europe. When a new book appeared, word would quickly pass along the grapevine, and lines would form quickly. Occasionally in walking around town I would join a line leading to a

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sidewalk stall, thinking it might be imported bananas or figs or some other exotic desirable, only to find that the wait was for a new book. Almost any book would do, as long as it was new, and in Bulgarian. In a linguistic universe this small, the appearance of new books was an event, and the appetite for them remarkable. A Scribner's was hardly possible in Sofia not only because of press control, but also because the very smallness of the audience made the kind of abundance Scribner's offers unrealistic.

We had also missed in Sofia the wonderful used-book shops that are characteristic in much of Europe. In Moscow the "commission shops" had superb finds in old Russian books, and in Old Town in Prague there were old-book shops, with treasures in Czech and German and Hebrew that were a bibliophile's delight. In our two non-Communist posts in Europe, Paris and Stockholm, the old bookstalls and bookstores had been among the chief joys of life: I had spent innumerable fast-flowing hours along the Seine, or on the rue de Rivoli, or in Stockholm's Ostermalm, searching out curiosities and treasures. In Sofia, this joy was not to be found, and we missed it—as we did the entire world of the bookstore as we know it in the United States. Any bookstore is better than no bookstore, but Communist bookstores exist in a different dimension from ours. As much as we had enjoyed many aspects of Sofia, if the definition of the good life includes access to books in a pleasant commercial establishment, offering convenience and freedom of choice, then Bulgaria does not qualify as one of the places in which to lead the good life. Nor do the other Communist countries.

Against the Bulgarian backdrop—its controlled press, its hunger for books, its quintessential seller's market for the printed word—we had come back to the United States, to all the riches and poverty of the world of bookstores in America. I want to tell about four stops, in New Hampshire, Washington, Atlanta, and North Carolina.

Arriving in Hanover for our son's wedding, my wife and I very soon made our way to one of his favorite places and now one of ours, the Dartmouth Book Store. After Sofia it appeared to us as a kind of book-buyer's paradise. It seemed a showcase of taste and wide choice. It drew us in and held us. It reminded me of glorious hours in Blackwell's in Oxford or Galignani's in Paris. Like Scribner's, the Dartmouth Book Store met what I believe may be the three prime qualifications for a good bookstore. It had an ample choice in a logical presentation. It had a free selection of wares not only for standard tastes but for tastes individual, specialized, even eccentric. And it had an ambience of bookishness, an untraceable feeling that people who loved books were in charge. I could easily conceive of the good life being led in Hanover, as long as the Dartmouth Book Store was there.

Washington, when it came to bookstores, offered that curious blend of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, attainment and falling short, that is the city's hallmark, whether in politics, morals, or urban living. If asked whether the good life is possible in Washington, I would have to say, after spending a good many years there, "I think so, but I am not sure of it." If asked whether the bookstores are satisfactory, I would give the same answer.

Of course the capital is a singular locality, part tourist attraction, part power center, part stretched-out suburbia, with a downtown business district that is in a state of lasting confusion between being either a city or a weekday village center. The bookstores share this mixed heritage. Although downtown Washington has some stores that can compete with Scribner's or Dartmouth, I suspect that most books are bought and sold at the standard suburban shopping-center outlets (more on those when we reach Atlanta). Like most things in Washington, the bookstores bear the fell stamp of politics: there seems to be a great skewing toward the politically trendy, an illness particularly corrupting of decent writing. I detected a surplus of volumes pushing current political or economic fads, or analyzing those people pushing them, but comparatively few books about real life. Many bookstores—and I repeat that there are some fine ones—seemed designed to be timely, not timeless, to be less suited to the good life than to the "in" life or the up-to-the-moment life. The freedom of choice would make book buyers in Bulgaria gasp; but the preoccupation with power and ideology would not seem alien to them.

Along with good bookstores, Washington also hosts representatives of that new species, the book discount mart. I am sure that these

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play a useful role in the marketplace of ideas, but I suppose I reveal myself as an old fogy when I say that somehow the little yellow stickers, noting that this Shakespeare is "15% off list price," or that this Emily Dickinson is on "double discount," offend me. Desirable books are to be found, but the atmosphere is wrong—it conduces to shopping, not to browsing; it smacks of marketing more than reading. The grouping of books follows certain commercial principles not related to literature. You do not stroll through sections of classics; you march through shelves of "Publishers' Special Cut-Rate Editions," or "Lavishly Illustrated Editions Marked Down"—the determining principle being price, not content, as if the customers were looking for that literature costing between $3.95 and $5.50. That is not how I prefer to buy books. No one in these places seems to love books, or even to like them, except as money-makers. The psychology is wrong, at least for me: I feel as if I should quickly buy a couple of marked-down best-sellers and go off to look for a bookstore. The Bulgarian book lovers I knew would go berserk over the choice and the bargains but would be offended at the approach.

Perhaps I am prejudiced. This may be partly because of a certain depressing sight I saw in one such discount book mart. (I later learned to my sorrow that the sight is common in a great many American bookstores.) Stocking in the up-to-date, high-volume stores is of course done by computer, and small unintelligible markings somehow tell the clerks when a volume is past its prime of shelf life, rather like milk in a supermarket. In paying for my hurriedly bought best-sellers, I saw a clerk behind the counter determinedly ripping off the covers from a great stack of paperbacks, discarding the denuded books themselves into a great trash can. (I recalled my Bulgarian friends standing long in line for a new book, *any* new book, and wondered with what horror they would react to this bibliocide.) The clerk politely explained that nowadays one did not return whole books to the publisher when they went stale; one simply returned the cover and discarded the remains as waste-paper. Over the years I have become used to disposable razor blades, and now disposable razors, and even to a throwaway society built on plastic and paper disposable items—in Bulgaria they still religiously collect scrap and save plastic bags—but I find the thought of disposable books too much to bear.

Our next stop was Atlanta, where I was born and where my mother and sister and a daughter live. Of course, I did not go to downtown Atlanta itself. For many years now, during my visits, I have had to invent special excuses for nostalgic trips downtown, for my family and friends seem to circulate almost entirely in the suburbs and on the expressways between the suburbs. This means that the downtown Atlanta bookshops of my youth—those lovely little stores not far from Five Points, where I spent some of the best hours of my adolescence—are all gone, or have moved someplace where I cannot find them. I have a feeling that this displacement is true of many, if not most, present-day American cities; so, as I regret the passing of my beloved bookstores in Atlanta, you may also regret the passing of bookstores in your town.

What do we have in Atlanta now, in the suburbs? We have bookselling establishments. They are in modern shopping malls, alongside freeways. We have up-to-date, efficient *bookselling stores*, comfortable, relatively spacious sometimes, air-conditioned certainly, opening off plant-laden and music-filled walkways, part of elaborate mall complexes that offer anything one could possibly want to buy, except perhaps the unusual. Bookselling clerks are often literate, sometimes even polite. Books are placed in sections by rigorous, if sometimes confused, logic. Replenishment is by computer, and a chirping machine can tell you, via the clerk, if the book you want is in stock. In short, the needs and wants of the average book buyer are modernly met. But oh, how cold it is! How unconducive to browsing! How far removed from the crowded bookstores of my youth, with their something-for-every-taste!

Well, I need not carry on with exclamation points, since the bookstores most everyone goes to nowadays are quite likely the same. I suppose, in fact, that for Americans at large such bookstores are the future, that Scribner's and Dartmouth and all the little idiosyncratic bookstalls we have known will before long merge into great marketing combines that will offer identical outlets in every American shopping center. As with so much of American life—the Bulgarians and other East Europe-

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ans are greatly attracted by it—this will have the benefits of uniformity. Just as we can order the same hamburger or taco or pizza from coast to coast and receive the same taste, for better or for worse, so we may go into the same book-marketing establishments, in millions of malls, and find the same sections, the same computer cards, the same crazy logic, the same best-seller-list counter, the same books—the same absence of individuality. And, if all those stores—or their very few corporate heads, or their behind-the-scenes computers—tell all the publishing houses what will sell, or what they want to sell, or what ought to sell, what will happen then to American literature, to American literacy? Will this not have some sad similarities to the bookstore situation obtaining in Bulgaria, or in those dreary Soviet book outlets I visited from Smolensk to Khabarovsk, from Murmansk to Tashkent?

But wait, we had one more stop. We had rented a cottage in the mountains of North Carolina, down near the Georgia state line, between Franklin and Highlands. We spent a couple of weeks there, and bookstores figured in. My first intimation from touring downtown Franklin was that there were no books to be bought. This turned out to be a venial exaggeration. In a shopping center I found a store with a fairly large paperback book counter. A hasty glance showed that the selection had been made by the same man, or firm, or computer, that selected books for the Boston and Atlanta airports and for the supermarkets of New England and the South. Particularly striking, after two years in the Balkans, were the huge strides made in some direction or other in the technology—I do not want to call it art—of making shiny, flashy covers for paperback best-sellers. All the books in the best-seller section had gold or silver covers with gaudy embossed script letters, and there were often illustrated double covers with clever holes to look through at the second cover. Very bright, very compelling until one has looked at a few score and realizes that the same gaudiness is at work for *Princess Daisy*, the latest horror best-seller, John Updike, and a new edition of the New Testament. I soon found that content was not affected by outside tinsel. I decided that my Bulgarian acquaintances would be impressed, but not for long.

I also discovered a card shop that carried a few books. In our home-leave wanderings, I had become accustomed to the somewhat bizarre idea that in the United States people buy few books but great quantities of birthday cards, so that books are tagged on—along with birthstone rings and fancy beer mugs—as a subsidiary impulse temptation for the good people who buy cards. (Neither in Bulgaria nor in my conception of the good life is there much of a place for greeting-card shops.) The few books in this card shop were rigorously divided into Religion, Gothic, Romance, and Science Fiction, with no room left over for any book not conformable to those rubrics. This depressed me. To my surprise, however, I found a shelf of *used* paperbacks, mostly best-sellers of moons gone by, with marked-down prices scratched on their gaudy covers. Even better, in a trunk by the door I found a group of "bargain books," of older vintage, including a *Catcher in the Rye*, which my two accompanying daughters, sixteen and twelve, read with absorption. It cost me ten cents. Perhaps some books were not considered disposable in America, after all.

That weekend I briefly checked out the mountain "flea market" in Franklin, where area folk rent stalls to sell assorted homely wares. I found several stalls with books. The strange thing is that they were nearly all paperbacks—*old* paperbacks with non-gaudy covers, editions I had enjoyed buying for twenty-five cents when Pocket Books and the kangaroo symbol were new and fun. These books had evidently been sitting around in mountain attics for a long time, but they were in decent condition—*and* they had not been thrown out. They had been treated the way Bulgarians treat books, with care. Their covers had not been torn off; they had not been junked. Now they were selling for fifty cents or even a dollar. Here in the Great Smokies, I saw, a kind of scarcity economy still existed, at least as far as books were concerned. How very far from the discount house, the supermarket shelf—and how close to Sofia.

There was one last stop, and it was a delightful one. It restored a lot of faith. This was in the lovely little mountain resort town of Highlands, the home of Cyrano's Bookshop.

After the cultural inquietudes of home leave, feeling a goodly distance from the good life, my wife and I walked into this cool bookstore from the hot July sunshine and felt

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immediately at home, unhurried, ready to browse at leisure. Not a huge number of customers, and no clerk to bother us until we wanted help. Not a vast number of books, but a satisfactory selection, picked with taste and care, just right for restorative browsing. Books arranged where one could inspect them thoughtfully. Sections done logically, with a civilized mixture of shallow and deep, old and new, hard and soft, known and unfamiliar. Books obviously selected by someone with literary taste, not by a computer. A generous selection of good poetry. Lots of classics. Enough idiosyncratic books to perk one's interest. A sprinkling of volumes not seen at every other shop. A paucity of gaudiness. A real bookstore, for real book lovers. It passed my threefold criteria with brilliant marks. We could have spent the night.

Naturally we spent far too much time browsing, but we found many good books and bought quite a few. The proprietor, friendly in a gentle way, not pushing anything, joked that we had bought some of his best offerings. Among our purchases was Scott A. Berg's *Max Perkins*, and the proprietor said that he had read this biography of the great Scribner's editor with particular pleasure. Then he took the time to relate to us a couple of Berg's anecdotes dealing with Thomas Wolfe (from North Carolina) and Asheville (not far up the road from Highlands). It was a comfortable moment. I felt as if I were in the right place, in that little bookstore, and that the future of American literature had to be all right. I felt that my literary friends from Sofia, or Prague, or Moscow, those book lovers deprived of the freedom of choice, would weep with joy at this lovely little store. I felt that this, indeed, had something to do with an attempt at defining the good life.

By pure accident I came around full circle, from Scribner's to Maxwell Perkins, from a good big bookstore in Manhattan—via Eastern Europe—to a good little bookstore in North Carolina. I decided along the way that the importance, for me at least, of having a comfortable bookstore at hand with a wide and free choice of books could not be exaggerated.

The voyage from the Communist to the capitalist world, through the medium of bookstores, had been instructive. On the simplest level, my Bulgarian friends would be astonished at the literary wealth of our bookstores, flabbergasted at the freedom of choice. I became keenly conscious again of this American ability, part materialistic, part meta-materialistic, to inspire envy. Book lovers in all the Communist lands—and by our standards they make up a remarkably high percentage of the population—would choose our open marketplace in a minute, if they could choose. One could go beyond books to ideas, but there is no need to labor the point of the attraction of free choice to educated men and women, in Eastern Europe or wherever. Still, one of the profound sadnesses of life in those regulated countries today is not being able to choose what to read.

At the same time, I was disturbed at what seems to be the future of American bookstores if present directions continue. It saddens me to think of a day in my own country when there might be nothing but homogenized book-selling from coast to coast. It is not literature that makes up an essential part of the good life; it is reading, and that means bookstores. Freedom of the press is not a Platonic ideal: it comes down finally to what is available for reading to ordinary men and women in the ordinary course of their lives. It requires diversity to work right.

If we lose the individual, the eccentric, the out-of-the-way, from our world of books, we lose too much. All the first-rate writing and conscientious publishing in the world will not help us unless we have good bookstores to entice us to where the good books are.

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A Question of Aesthetics

BARBARA GOLDBERG

He never wrote a letter without
the words "despair" or "terror"
as in, "Even as a child I knew
despair," or, "How to turn
this terror into art." How romantic
it seemed then, like living
a Russian novel, his final note
read, "Tell her our relationship
was fully satisfying in every way."

No one ever says how thrilling
pain is, how it takes you like
a lover, how your body cringes
before surrender. At first
you cry no, no, then swoon
into its burly arms. You should see
your open mouth, your breath coming
in harsh gasps. Trust pain
to find the choicest part, the marrow,
and suck our resolve, leaving you
limp. But oh, how you'll sleep.

The only burden heavier than pain
is boredom, want of danger. When I
teach *Anna Karenina* to young girls,
I say, "Every woman should experience
one disastrous love affair and survive."
How like a woman Anna was, to hesitate
because she could not bear to throw
her red purse away. How like a man
he was to put a bullet someplace deadly.
As a woman who's survived, I see boredom
now as comfort, devotion as something
precious, and death in any form,
a slap across the face.

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Bach the Rhetorician

OTTO L. BETTMANN

In *The Art of the Novel*, Henry James observed that "the successful application of any art is a delightful spectacle, but the theory too is interesting, and though there is a great deal of the latter, without the former, I suspect there never had been a genuine success without a latent core of conviction." Johann Sebastian Bach's music no doubt is a "delightful spectacle" and a "genuine success." Yet its creator kept silent about the "latent core conviction" that moved his pen. His contemporaries criticized him for his ostensible lack of interest "in the science of music," a flourishing field during the Age of Enlightenment into which Bach was born.

It was a time when reason was thought capable of solving all life's riddles and of providing music with a rational basis. Manfred F. Bukofzer, in his *Music of the Baroque Era* (1947), lists nearly five hundred tracts on musical aesthetics. Not only critics but practicing composers were expected to reveal their aesthetic convictions through theory and to sing music's praise as the art of arts. Bach did not join the chorus. He was too busy writing music to find time to write about it.

Even if Bach did not reveal his aesthetic convictions by writing theoretical treatises, he had a definite philosophy of music that guided him whenever he moved his pen. In the theories he embraced, as in the practice of his art, Bach was very much a traditionalist. He readily accepted the musical forms in use when he appeared on the scene: toccatas and suites, sonatas, cantatas, chorales, and concertos. Through "study and tireless meditation upon them," as Nikolaus Forkel, his first biographer, reports, Bach developed these forms, expanding and ultimately transforming them into creations daring enough to mark him as a progressive. He even has been called a "revolutionary of music." With similar zeal, Bach absorbed the aesthetic doctrines prevailing in his day. Yet here, too, he greatly enlarged them, bringing forth not only a harvest of works unprecedented in their depth and range but also a Bachian aesthetic all his own.

Central to the complex network of Bach's theoretical views was the conviction that music, to fulfill its function, had to follow the rules of rhetoric. These rules had been codified in antiquity and had prevailed since that time. The interchange of ideas between rhetoric and music had become, if anything, even more intense in the baroque era. The reigning aesthetic of the day held as a basic tenet that music was a form of speech, "speech elevated by sound"—or, more onomatopoetically in German, music was believed to be "Klingende Rede." From this premise it followed that the rules for shaping a public address, for organizing its ideas, and for choosing its mode of delivery applied equally to the writing and performing of music.

This congruence of music and rhetoric had already been evident in the work of antiquity's greatest theorist of oratory, Marcus Fabius Quintilianus. In his *De Institutio Oratoria*, written circa A.D. 95, Quintilian had suggested that the study of oratory begin with the study of music. This, he believed, would help the young orator to develop a sense of rhythm, pace, articulation, and the choice of an adequate pitch.

Even before the time of Quintilian, it was not uncommon for the orator to look to music for guidance. Gaius Sempronius Gracchus, a master of rhetoric in his age, when set to deliver a speech, hired a musician to stand

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behind him with a pitch pipe or "tonario." It was the assistant's duty to indicate the "tonus" in which Gracchus planned to talk and, if he unduly raised his voice, to apprise the orator of this deviation.

The study of both music and rhetoric was still mandatory in the universities of the early eighteenth century. Bach, to his later regret, did not receive the academic training enjoyed by many master musicians of his time. His formal studies ended after attendance—and rather spotty attendance at that—at two well-known Latin schools, the Lyceum in Ohrdruf (1695–1700) and the Michaelis Academy in Lüneburg (1700–1703). At both schools music and rhetoric were studied with intensity, with Cicero's *De oratore* the primary classical text for rhetoric. This book, which enjoyed a new vogue during the Renaissance when it was frequently reprinted, was regarded as an unsurpassed guide, not only for the composing of a speech, but for elegant writing generally. The principles it propounded, those of clarity, brevity, and grace, set a standard for all forms of discourse. We know that Bach as a youth studied Cicero and that he acquitted himself well as a Latinist. In later years his knowledge of the language and his familiarity with classical ideas were impressive, especially for a man who lacked university training.

Forced to earn his own way, Bach became a professional musician at the early age of seventeen. To succeed he had to make "musica practica" his main concern. Yet from the beginning Bach was urged on to unravel the secret of his art, if only to himself. This made him a lifelong student. Even in later years, the heavy demands of his career and family did not keep him from being an avid reader. He assembled a library of some eighty volumes—at the time a considerable collection of books for a man of his income. (One of the most interesting documents we possess in Bach's hand is a receipt he signed after bidding at a book auction.) And Bach's studies profited further by the exchange of ideas with like-minded colleagues. We know of at least two friendships that ostensibly deepened his understanding of the aesthetics of music.

During his stay in Weimar (1708–17) as court organist to Duke Wilhelm Ernst, Bach profited greatly from his contact with a member of his own family, Johann Gottfried Walther, an organist and composer of considerable standing. Both men, in animated interchanges, transcribed a number of recently acquired Vivaldi violin concertos for the organ. These exercises were to have a decided influence on the development of Bach's style. Walther, the author of the first European dictionary of music, was well versed in theory. It is highly probable that he further acquainted Bach with ideas current in this field, in particular with the writings of the seventeenth-century Jesuit-polyhistorian, Athanasius Kircher. Kircher's *Musurgia universalis* (1650) was readily accessible, for a German translation had appeared in 1684. It contained a section that clearly propounded the idea of music as *ars rhetorica*.

A conjunction of fortuitous circumstances brought Bach into contact with Johann Matthias Gesner, one of his era's great teachers of rhetoric. Bach had first met this renowned philologist in Weimar. Their friendship was revived when in 1730 Gesner became rector of Leipzig's Thomas-Schule, of which Bach was music director. Gesner had a warm affection for his colleague and a fine understanding of his music. Although there is no direct proof that the two men discoursed upon rhetoric, it scarcely seems possible that the subject did not often come up between them.

The fruitfulness of the association between Bach and Gesner is attested to by two later incidents. In 1737, three years after Gesner had left Leipzig to become professor of rhetoric at the University of Göttingen, he published an annotated edition of Quintilian. This great theoretician of rhetoric (and also of education) praised in one section of his work the skill of antiquity's "cytharist-musicians" and their fine ensemble playing. Gesner also added a commentary, which might have been entitled "You Haven't Heard Anything Yet." Addressing the Roman rhetorician in a chummy way, Gesner observed in a gloss, "You would think but slightly of these accomplishments if, returning from the underworld, you could see Bach. I mention him particularly since he was not long ago my colleague at the Thomas-Schule in Leipzig." Then Gesner launches into a panegyric of Bach and his wizardry as an orchestral leader, praising him as "a musician able to effect what not many Orpheuses nor twenty Orions could achieve."

In 1747 Bach became involved in a project that confirms his strict allegiance to Quintil-

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ian's rhetorical doctrines. The project in question was *A Musical Offering*, the series of fugues Bach wrote on the Royal Theme given to him by King Frederick II of Prussia in Potsdam (see my article "Bach at Potsdam" in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, Winter 1982/83). The sequence of fugues in the original printed edition, which Bach sent to King Frederick, seemed rather puzzling and oddly arbitrary. Learned tomes have been written in an attempt to improve on Bach's order and to put forth a more plausible plan. Yet it always seemed incongruous that Bach, a stickler for perfection and a man who, on the testimony of his students, "hated the unfinished and the fragmentary," would fail to apply his highest standards to his gift for a king. We now recognize that Bach did indeed utilize a very deliberate, utterly sensible scheme in writing and arranging the nine fugues and canons that comprise this work. The musicologist Ursula Kirkendahl was able to demonstrate that in *A Muscial Offering* Bach followed "to the minutest detail precepts developed by Quintilian in his *De Institutio Oratoria*." Kirkendahl writes: "The various pieces represent the successive sections of an oration. Bach writes no more and no fewer than those prescribed by Quintilian . . . and in proper order. . . . His imitation is not limited to vague or chance elements—it is very concrete and systematic, extending even to the smallest detail."

A Musical Offering is not the only work in Bach's mighty opus in which he followed rhetorical precepts. One can even go so far as to say that the majority of his creations were built on a ground plan akin to the one recommended by antiquity's *ars oratoria*. The reason for this is obvious. The fugue is the trademark of Bach's music and an ever-recurring characteristic of his style. The fugue is not a standard musical form but rather a way of writing, imitating the pattern the ancient rhetoricians tried to achieve when delivering a speech. In writing fugues Bach begins by stating the theme, the musical idea to be explored (the *inventio* in rhetorical nomenclature). He develops this theme in variants, counter-themes, and successive tonalities (*emulatio*). Always intent upon achieving a circular, closed form, he strives towards a finale that takes the listener back to the theme originally stated (what the ancient orators called *reditus ad propositum*).

Bach offered his own definition of the fugue, one that reveals his rhetorical orientation: a fugue is a polite conversation, he told his students, consisting not of words, but of voices, at times in dispute but in the end returning in harmony to the initial thesis. It is this circularity—the return to the beginning—that gives the fugue an effect both affirmative and consoling. When listening to Bach, one is never lost. However daring the flight of imagination, however complex the journey, Bach's music always brings us home. This same result is achieved by the skilled writer or speaker who leaves us, not with a bundle of disjointed ideas, but with a valid conclusion upon which to rest.

Bach was born to fugal music. He adopted this well-established and highly developed style and shaped it to his own ends. So supreme a mastery did he achieve in the fugal language that he used it like a native tongue. His spontaneous and acrobatic skill with fugues (he has been called "the fugue's lusty juggler") paralleled the gifted orator's adroit manipulation of words.

But Bach's commitment to the tenets of *ars oratoria* is most resoundingly displayed in his cantatas. The monumental *Kantata-Werk* represents over one-third of his entire oeuvre, adding up to an encyclopedia of his musical language. Quintessential Bach, the cantatas embody all the musical forms he cultivated in his lifetime, instrumental and vocal, secular and sacred. They are not only astounding but seemingly unfathomable in their variety of themes, forms, and mood. Yet a pattern can be discerned in the approximately two hundred cantatas history has bequeathed us. (Bach wrote considerably more, but some, alas, have been lost.) These works are the products of a unifying vista that inspired and guided Bach when he wrote them.

Subscribing to the prevailing ethos of his time, Bach considered the cantata in essence a sung sermon, a resounding preachment (*eine Klingende Predigt*), a discourse as inspirational in nature as the speeches given in the Roman forum were political and hortatory. Both oratorical species were believed subject to identical rules codified by Quintilian. These rules were set out in such detail that they required twelve books of exposition. But Quintilian's rules were subsumed in a three-part formula. This formula directed the

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speaker to apply three "gambits of persuasion": To be effective, a speech should stir the emotions—it had to move (*movēre*); it also assumed the task of enlightening and educating (*educare*); but the effect of being moved and educated had to end in delight (*delictare*).

Hence the orator should first engage his listeners on an emotional level, grip them with pathos, and sweep them into a different way of feeling. Once the audience's sentiments had been aroused, its attention secured, factual arguments had to be advanced: the speaker should educate his listeners and make them better ethically by making them better informed. But these efforts would come to naught, the rhetorical canon held, unless a speech generates in its listeners a reaction of elation and delight. Even if the subject of a speech was grim, the orator had to try to enthrall his audience by the elegance of his argumentation, a flattering anecdote (*captatio benevolentiae*), and by the beauty of the argument's structure.

Bach's church cantatas employ these rhetorical formulae. Their chorales or instrumental openings are aimed to uplift—to move—the listener. Like the Protestant chorales upon which most cantatas were based, the choruses initially intoned were "we songs." They expressed commonly held beliefs, fears, and hopes, and implored God for mercy, help in adversity, and relief from the burden of sin. In contrast to the cantata's choruses and chorales representing (as in the choruses of Greek tragedy) the voice of the people, Bach's arias vented the feelings and fears of the individual soul. In its overall design, the cantata paralleled the preacher's Sunday sermon, and it aimed for a similar emotional effect. But through his music, Bach amplified and empowered the message of the day, moving his listeners to a higher level of perceptiveness and finally onto the plane of spirituality.

Music seemed preordained to function in this manner, for it was, according to the founder of Protestanism, Martin Luther, a mode of address that was "divinely inspired." Because music possessed the power, in Luther's phrase, to "pierce the sky," it could be employed as a direct link between the believer and God (whose angels did not speak, but sung). This conviction was congruent with the tenets of Protestantism, which held that priestly intercession was unnecessary in one's dialogue with the Divine. Bach, the staunch Protestant, along with his co-religionists, held that the believer could gain direct access to God through music. We have proof that Bach's thought ran along these lines: in a Bible commentary, a volume from his own library (now in the possession of the Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis), Bach underlined the passage, "wherever music is made, God in his mercy is present."

Bach's appeal to the believers was not confined to the realm of the emotional. Like the orator of antiquity, he also assumed in his cantatas the role of guide and teacher, dispensing lessons in Christian morality. "Follow God's law," he admonishes his audience; "be neighborly and compassionate, lead a righteous life, and God will not abandon you." Music was believed to be eminently suited not only to purvey this message of salvation, but to be endowed, through its tonal majesty, with the power of reforming the sinner.

In the baroque period music was still viewed as a morally meliorative force. In 1747 Bach was elected to the Society of Musical Sciences, which was a great personal triumph for the "unlearned" cantor. The Society was a group of outstanding musicians joined up to propagate music as a means "to soothe passions and improve morals." Handel, too, was a member of this society and enthusiastically embraced its cause. When Handel was complimented after the first London performance of his *Messiah* for presenting to his listeners "a noble entertainment," the composer somewhat gruffly replied, "I should be sorry if I only entertained them. I want to make them better."

It is no wonder that Bach could give his cantatas such convincing and often endearing qualities as lessons in Christian education. He was a passionate teacher. The didactic methods he used in the cantatas were obviously shaped by the very doctrines of rhetoric by which he himself had been taught in his youth. One of the cardinal rules he adopted was that a message, to be persuasive, must be presented in its briefest and most concise form. Each of Bach's cantatas emphasizes a simple biblical truth, easily comprehended but repeated time and again in various guises (*Repetitio est mater persuendo*).

That the message be clearly enunciated was

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also a pedagogic imperative that Bach observed with special care when writing his recitativos. These were declamatory in nature—to be intoned by a single voice (enforced by a basso continuo accompaniment). In contrast to the arias, which were lyrical and contemplative in mood, the recitativos conveyed factual and didactic information. They related biblical events and explained biblical doctrine. Musically, they presented a variant of speech-song—"still speech and not quite yet music" (a musico-rhetorical hybrid).

Bach showed his signal respect for the words of the recitativos by providing for their clear and sensible enunciation and accent. In all his vocal writings he assiduously observed the rhetorical precept that, as each sentence must have its emphases and pauses, so, too, must the musical phrase alternate between movement and repose.

Always striving for a perfect blend of text and melody, Bach was inspired in this effort by his considerable verbal gifts. The miraculous musician was also ingenious with words. A creditable versifier, he at times tinkered with poetry, which he used to sharpen his cantata texts. He was always demanding of his librettists—never quite satisfied with the text they delivered. As Puccini later pleaded for words "that would make the world weep," Bach searched for texts that would make his music soar. Words inspired him; they ignited the flame of his imagination. His favorites were biblical texts, especially the Psalms by King David, whom Bach esteemed as a fellow musician. But even when he had to rely on librettist poetasters who furnished him with texts overloaded with absurd metaphors ("Christ you are my water bath"), his music would carry the words aloft in melodies of shimmering beauty.

In purveying their lessons, ancient orators were warned not to be too heavy-handed. The Romans well knew that audiences are fickle, impatient, and in constant need of humoring. Instructors in rhetoric stressed that, however profound a speech's message might be, it could not win over the listeners unless its general effect was one of delight.

This dictate guided Bach not only in the writing of his cantatas but in many of his other works conceived as teaching aids, such as *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, the *Inventions*, and the various installments of the *Clavier-Übung*. These works declared, along with their intent to teach, a hope that they would at the same time delight. Clearly marked on the title pages of these works, Bach noted often in his own hand "*Zur Gemuets-Ergoetzung*," which literally translated means to serve "godification," to uplift the player's spirit. In writing his cantatas Bach, too, had *Gemuets-Ergoetzung* very much in mind, and it was in these works that his genius wrought its greatest miracles.

The cantata was already a mainstay in liturgical music when Bach began composing. Members of his own family had dutifully written cantatas for the Sunday service of their church. Many of Bach's contemporaries ground out cantatas in assembly-line fashion. (Bach's friend Telemann composed operas and cantatas and passions in such profusion that he gained for himself an entry in the *Guinness Book of World Records*.) Most cantatas, however, were un-inventive, pedestrian, and quite as dull as the textbook schemes they followed. They lacked that quality of sparkle, surprise, and spiritual uplifting that Bach was to add to the genre. He moved the cantata, once a liturgical teaching piece, in the direction of the instrumental concerto. By stressing the use of string and wind instruments, even trumpets and timpani whose use had been legally restricted to princely pageants, Bach offered the congregation a measure of relief from doctrinaire pounding, providing it with supreme musical delights—even a modicum of entertainment.

The preference for such secular elements expressed itself in the baroque era most strongly in the growing popularity of opera. Opera became all the rage in Italy, and its reverberations were strongly felt in German church music. Even an orthodox preacher like Erdmann Neumeister (a prolific writer of cantata texts) could declare that a cantata was nothing but "a piece of opera with aria and recitative." That Bach thought of his cantatas essentially as concertizing pieces is indicated by the way he titled them. He called none of the works we today class as cantatas by this name. Rather he titled them "concerto," "concertato," or, in a throwback to rhetorical terminology, "dialogus."

It is scarcely surprising that Bach would enliven the cantata's form with the aid of pleasure-giving orchestral elements. During his

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incumbency as Kapellmeister (maestro) in Cöthen (1717–23), he almost exclusively wrote music designed to provide pleasure and musical jollification at court ceremonies. In the course of this assignment, Bach had created an abundance of masterful works for instruments and chamber orchestra. When Bach came to Leipzig in 1723 and began to produce cantatas at a furious pace, his orchestral ambitions became more pronounced. Under the pressure of manifold obligations, he frequently recycled instrumental pieces written in Cöthen and used them in his church music. (The first movement of the third Brandenburg Concerto, for example, became the introductory "Sinfonia" of his Cantata 174.) He also revived some of the thirty-odd cantatas he had written earlier in Mühlhausen and Weimar, giving some of them a stronger instrumental underpinning. In this way, Bach transformed homey religious messages into artistic creations of the highest order—reaching beyond dogma and rising above denomination.

If Bach's early Leipzig cantatas attempted by all indications to infuse "delight" into his "Haupt-Musik," his efforts to revitalize the service of the Thomas Kirche by music in the concerto style met with opposition from the start. His pleas for additional funds to hire more instrumentalists were continually denied. Even when Bach had first been hired, the members of the Leipzig town council had expressed apprehension about filling a cantor's post with a "Kapellmeister." They were committed to the old-fashioned, vocally oriented church music. Bach's work contract had included a promise that he would not write music that was "too operatic." These constraints made Bach's Leipzig stay, in the words of Paul Hindemith, one of "creative frustration." The mighty stream of cantatas he had produced in his first years at the Thomas Kirche (1723–26) now slowed to a trickle. He began redirecting his genius toward secular forms, especially to harpsichord music—music whose avowed aims were to teach, to entertain, and to delight.

Did Bach regard himself as a "rhetorician"? Because he was so hesitant to reveal the compositional principles he followed, we have no pronouncements from him that would answer this question definitely. But we do have the records of a conflict that erupted between Bach and one of the music critics of the day, Johann Adolph Scheibe, and these clearly show how Bach conceived of his own art. Because Bach had previously rejected him as organist of the Thomas Kirche, Scheibe, in what appears to have been a case of sour grapes, pronounced Bach's style "pompous and obscure." He also disrespectfully called him a "musikant" (a mere *musicus*—that is, a man ignorant of the aesthetics of music).

Bach must have found these criticisms chafing, to put it mildly. But as was his custom, he shied away from theoretical disputes, considering them (in the words of his son Carl Philipp Emanuel), "unimportant fiddle-faddle," especially those having to do with the mathematical basis of music. Yet some reply to Scheibe's charges seemed in order. Significantly, Bach did not turn to any of his loyal students to defend him, though many of them had by then become distinguished music theorists. Instead, he called on Johann Abraham Birnbaum, professor of rhetoric at Leipzig University, to lead the counter-attack. The dispute between him and Scheibe raged on for years, but Birnbaum held to his often-repeated thesis that Bach's art in all detail reflected the rules of *ars oratoria*. Bach was no "musikant," but the master of masters, and Birnbaum stated that he "so perfectly understood the resemblance of a musical piece with rhetoric, . . . that he was listened to with the utmost satisfaction and pleasure when he discoursed on the similarity and agreement between the two. . . . And he is generally admired for the skillful use he made of this in his work."

Exploring Bach's allegiance to *ars oratoria* can never finally explain the mystery, the magic of his art. But perhaps it can provide a clue to the ineffable way it engages our minds and hearts almost with the directness of a spoken language. It is no accident that his music communicates with its listeners so completely. Its creator, after all, utilized a core of proven rhetorical convictions to make sure that what he had to say would reach its mark. Ludwig Wittgenstein put it succinctly when he once observed that Bach's music, more than that of any other composer, is most closely akin to human speech.

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Weimar in America

WILFRED M. McCLAY

REFUGEE SCHOLARS IN AMERICA: THEIR IMPACT AND THEIR EXPERIENCES. *By Lewis A. Coser. Yale University Press.* $25.

Few events in this century have altered the landscape of American intellectual life so much as the massive immigration during the 1930s of German-speaking refugee intellectuals. In a strictly demographic sense, of course, the arrival of a few thousand exiles seems a tiny trickle when measured against the immense waves of European immigration that washed over the United States in the decades before the immigration-restriction statutes of the 1920s. But what this particular group lacked in size it made up in potency, for the infusion of a few powerful minds can change the chemistry of a culture. To be sure, American civilization has always been deeply indebted to exiles and immigrants for their intellectual contributions. Such influences, however, have generally manifested themselves in piecemeal fashion. To find a concentrated transfer of advanced learning comparable to that effected by the Hitler-era refugee scholars, one would have to search back through three hundred years of American history, to the great migration of English Puritans who founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

One need only consider the Puritans' intellectual legacy, its effects still very much in evidence today, to realize how consequential such a transfer can be. Of course, too close a comparison of these two intellectual migrations would be misleading, not to mention anachronistic, for the motives involved were entirely different. John Winthrop and his band of Old Testament–minded zealots conceived themselves to be embarked upon a divinely ordained mission, a European errand into the American wilderness. The German refugee intellectuals, however, most of them secular Jews and many with radical-leftist political sympathies, had a more mundane mission: sheer survival. Where the Puritans had responded to the pull of a new beginning, an Edenic regeneration, the German intellectuals felt only the diabolical push of Nazi terror, and many came to arch-capitalist America with the profoundest reluctance.

Even as reluctant emigrants, however, they were to have a telling effect, for their sensibilities had been shaped by an extraordinarily sophisticated intellectual culture, in a country whose high literacy rate and advanced educational institutions were the world's envy. They therefore brought to the United States a dauntingly high standard for intellectual endeavor, and made impressive contributions to nearly every field imaginable. Among them were the political and social thinkers like Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss, Karl Wittfogel, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Paul Lazarsfeld, and Erich Fromm; the psychologists and psychoanalysts Kurt Lewin, Erik Erikson, Bruno Bettelheim, Wilhelm Reich, Heinz Hartmann, and Karen Horney; the theologian Paul Tillich; the architects Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius; the artists Hans Hofmann and Josef Albers; the musicians Arnold Schoenberg, Paul Hindemith, and Kurt Weill; the filmmakers Otto Preminger, Fritz Lang, and Billy Wilder; and an astonishing number of gifted scientists, of whom the physicists Albert Einstein, Hans Bethe, Leo Szilard, and Edward Teller are merely the best known. Even this brief list barely begins to suggest how impressive was the array of imported intellect, for it necessarily omits the many distinguished scholars who happen to be little

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known outside their disciplines; nor can it take notice of the considerable number of gifted individuals who were, for a variety of reasons, unable to carve out a suitable niche for themselves in American intellectual life.

From the standpoint of the life of the mind, then, the German tragedy would appear to have resulted in a great and unambiguous windfall for the cultural life of the United States. And that is generally the light in which it has been regarded. As Walter W. S. Cook of the New York University Institute of Fine Arts, who recruited such notable refugee scholars as Erwin Panofsky, Walter Friedlaender, and Karl Lehmann, liked to quip, "Hitler is my best friend; he shakes the tree and I collect the apples." This widely shared sentiment was to be further reinforced by a posthumous romanticization of Weimar culture, which gathered momentum precisely as the 1920s themselves became transformed into misty memory, a poignant calm before the barbarous storm. But one need not accept Karl Mannheim's extravagant comparison of Weimar Germany to Periclean Athens to concede that the Republic witnessed a remarkable burst of vitality in nearly every field of intellectual or artistic endeavor. It represented perhaps the most lively and concentrated expression of modernism seen in this century, and by providing a haven for many of the refugee intellectuals, the United States fell heir to a sizable portion of the Republic's cultural legacy.

History, however, is far too cunning to award her bounties without also exacting a heavy price for them. An iron Newtonian law governs such matters: every historical benefit entails an equal and opposite cost. That Weimar culture obeyed this law is recognized even by its most admiring historians; as Peter Gay has observed, the excitement of Weimar was in large measure the product of "anxiety, fear, [and] a rising sense of doom." (Not exactly the sentiments one discovers in Pericles' funeral oration.) Such a melancholy law of compensation has never found its way into an assessment of Weimar's subsequent life in the United States, but common sense surely dictates that it ought to have. We all know that unearned wealth can be as much a curse as a blessing for its recipients, for it sometimes denies them the more solid satisfactions that come only with hard-won achievements and engenders crippling doubts about the adequacy of their yet-untested abilities. Did the intellectual migration bring a similar sort of misfortune, along with its unquestionable benefits, to American culture? By allowing us to gather up other nations' apples rather than to cultivate our own, did it reinforce the passive, derivative, and "archival" mentality that critics from Ralph Waldo Emerson to George Steiner have found to be a telling defect in our national culture?

To answer these questions, one would need a dispassionate appraisal of the intellectual migration from an explicitly American vantage point. But such a book has not yet been written. Nor is the primary reason difficult to find. Nearly every serious treatment of the subject has been written by the refugees themselves, or by their friends, relations, or students—in other words, by the very people least able or likely to provide a disinterested assessment. From H. Stuart Hughes's *Sea Change* to Anthony Heilbut's *Exiled in Paradise*, the major chronicles of this event have reflected the perspectives of the subjects themselves, and thus inevitably reflect their subjective understanding of their American experience and influence. When so well-regarded an American scholar as Hughes celebrated this second great migration as a "deprovincialization" of the American mind, he merely gave American voice to a sentiment harbored in many an emigrant heart.

For a number of years, it was plausible to claim that the migration had occurred too recently to admit of disinterested examination. By the end of the 1970s, however, this episode in American intellectual history was drawing to a close, for nearly all of the most prominent German-educated refugee intellectuals had passed from the scene. And with the passage of time, a more detached and historical perspective on these events has become increasingly possible. Tom Wolfe's infamous *From Bauhaus to Our House* (1981), which explored the way that the transplanted architectural thought of Weimar Germany came to dominate American architectural practice in the post–World War II era, may have been written in a combative spirit of *épater les artistes*, but it also served a worthy end by pointing the way toward a thoroughgoing reappraisal of Weimar's American career.

Of course, Wolfe's primary aim was to poke

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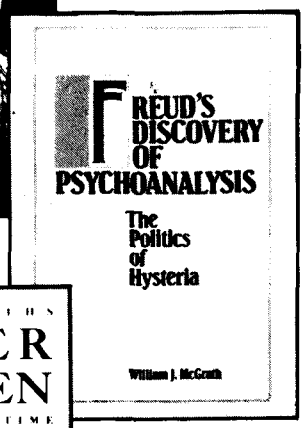

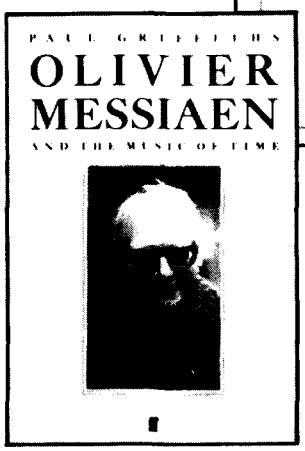

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fun at what he regarded as the fraudulent pretensions of the contemporary American architectural establishment. But his book also served to illuminate the Bauhaus aesthetic by reminding us of the historical context in which it originated. The early proponents of an international style strove mightily to efface the merely national or provincial in architectural expression and to replace it with transnational absolute form. But Wolfe was properly skeptical of their claims. Gropius and Mies, after all, had not sprung fully armed from the brow of Zeus; rather, their modernism, like any other aesthetic, was the product of a particular time and place. Their eager embrace of internationalism probably owed more to an understandable revulsion against recrudescent German racialism and the nationalistic carnage of World War I than to the far hazier attraction of positive ideals. The desire to create "worker housing" that eschewed any ornamentation or embellishment suggestive of "bourgeois mystification" reflected the times' subordination of aesthetics to a pervasive romantic Marxism—as second nature among Weimar-era intellectuals as era-of-limits environmentalism was among American college students in the 1970s. The reiterated injunction to "start from zero" in one's aesthetic thinking was more than an esoteric manifesto; it made profound emotional sense in the political and economic chaos of humiliated interwar Germany, whose fatally compromised liberal-democratic regime was detested by its radical enemies and damned with faint praise by its moderate friends.

But it would not make nearly so much sense in a triumphant post–World War II America, as the newly preeminent world power confidently approached the zenith of her influence and prosperity. Nevertheless, at the high-water mark of the American century, an aesthetic sensibility born in a humiliated German nation spinning toward further calamity was to burst forth and take the victorious Americans by storm. Hence the droll irony Wolfe discerned in the spectacle of the great corporate capitalists conducting their business in the Bauhaus-inspired steel-and-glass "worker housing" that began to spring up all over the urban American landscape.

It would be a mistake, however, to read any precise significance into this paradox, for nothing is more characteristically American than an eclecticism that plucks the blossoming flower while tossing away the historical stem and roots. Where else could Brecht and Weill's gruesome "Mack the Knife" have been transformed into Bobby Darin's finger-snapping, toe-tapping popular hit song? Of all nations, America cares least where something or someone comes from. Clean breaks with the past were nothing new in America; they were comfortably established as social and intellectual tradition. It was rather Van Wyck Brooks's plea for a "usable past," a cultural expression of the Progressive Era's conservationist strain, that seemed to go against the American grain. If in Germany "starting from zero" sounded provocative or risqué, in America it was a hoary truism, the Emersonian faith of our fathers. In this respect, German and American premises dovetailed with wonderful neatness.

But what Wolfe found particularly lamentable about the Bauhaus blitzkrieg was the way it effectively drove the achievements of Americans, notably Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan, out of the minds of aspiring architects in search of heroes to emulate. The ascendancy of Weimarian modernism would have a similar effect in many of the other arts. Schoenberg's serialism, which systematically abolished tonal hierarchy by the rigorously enforced "democratization" of musical tones, quickly came to dominate the thinking of young composers and critics, superseding the work of such inventive American-culture enthusiasts as Aaron Copland and Roy Harris. Moreover, it was the dazzling theorizing of émigrés like Hans Hofmann and Josef Albers, not the palpable example of American painters like Eakins, Sloan, and Hopper, that excited the imagination of the most talented young artists. Hence, at just the moment that America was coming of geopolitical age, American art was disengaging itself from the American scene. The usable past had quickly become passé.

This intellectual shift was accompanied by a dramatic change in the social organization of art. The "compound mentality" that Wolfe saw controlling the education of young architects at the most prestigious institutions was in fact an emerging professional mentality, one that came to have its equivalents in each of the arts—even, alas, "creative" writing. These institutionalized, bureaucratic guilds

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increasingly controlled entrée to their fields and largely dictated the climate of critical opinion. Small wonder that free spirits like Wright, Brooks, H. L. Mencken, Lewis Mumford, and George Gershwin—men who were, not coincidentally, busy creating a vernacular American culture worthy of the name—have become a nearly extinct species. Although the refugee artists did not create this movement toward institutionalization, they were especially quick to recognize and exploit it. When Gropius became the head of the Harvard architecture school, he also became a curator of the American architectural future.

The arts were not the only fields whose makeup the Central European refugees would help transform. In psychoanalysis, for example, Heinz Hartmann and his colleagues enjoyed astonishing success in importing, and imposing upon the American psychoanalytic establishment, a fundamentalist brand of Freudianism, delivered straight from the right hand of the Father. Thus the perdurable stereotype of the American psychoanalyst as a rigid dogmatist with a heavy Austro-German accent has considerable basis in fact. The legacy of this success, however, has been less than fortunate. As even so great an admirer as H. Stuart Hughes will admit, much of the present malaise in the psychoanalytic profession "directly derives from the triumph of the Central Europeans." Because Hartmann and Co. had "refused to discard any of the intellectual baggage" they had brought across the ocean, Hughes has charged, they contributed to an "ever wider gap" between orthodox theory and clinical reality. Their institutional triumph would translate into an intellectual setback for their discipline.

In the fields of political and social thought, too, the refugees achieved notable successes. Almost overnight, social research became an émigré specialty, conducted through such outposts as the New School for Social Research, the Bureau of Applied Social Research, and the Institute of Social Research. Such writers as Adorno, Lowenthal, and Lazarsfeld were especially interested in deep readings of American popular culture—soap operas, jazz, magazine articles about celebrities, recordings, radio broadcasts, "light" classical music, and the like—using a combination of diluted Marxism and psychoanalytic theory to reveal the "latent" meaning of these cultural artifacts. And, working in a rather different vein, such political thinkers as Hannah Arendt, Eric Voegelin, and Leo Strauss concentrated their attention on the philosophical origins of modernity and the recovery of the buried ancient roots of Western political thought.

Even this brief description suggests how profoundly their political and social vision was haunted by the ghost of Weimar. Indeed, the very word *Weimar* called forth a procession of tragic associations, for it stood for the intellectual heritage of Goethe, that exemplar of the German liberal *Zivilisation* that had repeatedly been demonstrated to be the most fragile of reeds. The new Republic was named for Goethe's city partly in the hope that it would become a political incarnation of his spirit. Thus, the entire chronology of events culminating in the Nazi seizure of power would be burned into the exiles' memories with an aching permanence, a permanence fixed by the uprooting they had suffered and by their retrospective knowledge of the horrors that the Republic's failure would unleash. When they turned their attention to the study of American politics and society, they could not help reading American conditions through the distorting filter of German experience. As Hannah Arendt's friend and admirer Randall Jarrell well understood, "You escaped from nothing: the westering soul / Finds Europe waiting for it over every sea."

In fact, the filtering process had begun even before they arrived. When Lotte Lenya was asked about her first impressions of America, she replied, "But we had no first impressions, for we had all seen the movies of Von Sternberg and Von Stroheim." Also influential were the arch-capitalist dystopias rendered in Kafka's *Amerika* and Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, along with the muckraking novels of Upton Sinclair (best-sellers in German translation), all of which helped give powerful shape to a gargoyle vision of America as a techno-capitalist monstrosity—"a mistake" and "an anti-paradise," Freud had groaned in famous dismay. America became synonymous with modernity, even in the most ethereal reaches of the culture; when Martin Heidegger deplored the modern era's worship of technology, science, and consumerism, he designated those errors simply as "Americanism." To him, such failings represented not merely some petty

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cultural peccadilloes, but betokened a state of ontological "fallenness," an alienation from Being itself.

It was no fresh green breast of the new world, then, that the exiles glimpsed upon arrival, but an environment that their preconceptions had made to seem eerily familiar. But another factor far more responsible for conditioning the émigrés' view of American institutions was German history. The American tradition of representative democracy had proved sturdy enough to endure considerable travails and transfers of power for a century and a half. But in Germany, democracy had shown only the most shaky prospects. The history of German liberalism was a depressing record of impotence and failure; it was never sufficiently established to resist the endemic polarization of German politics between factions of the extreme left and right, or to discourage the tendency of the sensitive "unpolitical man" to withdraw from public life, into the purer realm of culture.

The staggeringly rapid rate of German industrialization in the nineteenth century made intense social disruption virtually inevitable. A huge and discontented working class was born in but a few decades, drawn from a German population that had begun the nineteenth century in a decentralized culture of farms and small towns, a world legendary for its hidebound insularity. This wrenching social upheaval gave rise to the virulent anticapitalism and anti-modernism—and the anti-Semitism in which both would converge—that have been such fixtures in modern German political and social movements. Both comported well with a long-standing romantic disdain for mere "politics"—by which was meant the unseemly bargaining and compromising ways of Anglo-American democracy—in preference for an "organic" mode of organization that would restore the lost communal solidarity of *Gemeinschaft*. Weimar Germany was consumed with a "hunger for wholeness," in Peter Gay's words, a hunger that accounts for the desperate attraction of radical ideas—whether the example of the Soviet Union's "new society," or the prospect of a purified Teutonic *Kultur*. The relatively pallid and unspiritual appeal of Western-style parliamentary democracy was insufficent to gratify these deeper needs.

In short, radical ideas fit the feverish, unsettled atmosphere of Weimar Germany; but, once again, they were quite another matter in the postwar United States, where very different political and social conditions obtained. Nevertheless, the observations and prescriptions of many of the refugees would, not surprisingly, harken back to the calamitous events that had forced them into exile. "Refugees," mused Ignazio Silone, "spend most of their time telling one another the stories of their lives." Some of them, without always knowing it, would conceal their tales beneath the generalizing garment of philosophy.

The work of Hannah Arendt, who has influenced American conservatives, liberals, and radicals alike, is an instructive case in point. As a young student of philosophy in Marburg and Heidelberg during the 1920s, Arendt was disdainful of politics and uninterested in political philosophy; instead, she was captivated by the romantic aestheticism of her mentor, and lover, Martin Heidegger. When the time came for her to write her doctoral dissertation, she chose a subject far removed from her later concerns: St. Augustine's philosophy of love. It was not until events thrust politics upon her that she began to reflect upon the issues that would form the core of her life's work. Thus she was something of a late convert to the importance of political thought, and her subsequent work, although exhibiting a convert's boundless zeal, would also bear the ineradicable mark of one trained as an "unpolitical" philosopher, deeply embedded in the ways of German idealism.

Goaded into political thinking by the horrors of Nazism, she would attempt to reason backwards from the false to the true—from the premises of totalitarianism, which she had attempted to articulate in her monumental *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), to what she presumed would be a sounder philosophical foundation for political life. Like Heidegger, she sought the poisonous essence of "modernity" and found its antidote in the remote reaches of ancient Greek thought and language. The condition of the exiled, the homeless, the deracinated—the condition, in a word, that Hannah Arendt had experienced—became her prototype for the "superfluous" condition facing all mankind in the modern era. She had transformed her personal experience into a parable for the age, and so her vision of the "new science of politics" would

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pit itself directly against the sources of that experience.

Hannah Arendt's view of American society followed naturally from her assumptions. Like many of the refugees, she never lost a certain Weimarian nervousness about the possibility of an American fascism; during the Watergate crisis, for example, Arendt anxiously informed her friends that she was seriously thinking of "emigrating back to Europe *fast*, while there was still time." But the America of the distant past genuinely excited her admiration—the vanished eighteenth-century world of pre-industrial republicanism, whose "lost treasure" had been buried, she believed, beneath successive waves of industrialization and immigration. She had a passionate commitment to the idea of "action" in the political arena and to decentralized participatory democracy, as embodied in her vision of the Aristotelian *polis*. But, as with many of her other intellectual enthusiasms, she cherished "action" as an idea, an object of contemplation—not as real activity in the real world. When she was asked, at a conference given in her honor, to give specific examples of "action" as she conceived it, she was unable to provide any. Never was the essentially romantic quality of her political thought more evident. "Action" was merely an appealing abstraction, deduced by an aprioristic chain of reasoning; but its application in twentieth-century circumstances was far from clear. "She never quite grasped," a sympathetic William Barrett gently observed, "the realities of American politics."

Herbert Marcuse's view of America was less indulgent. Sounding as much like a thundering *Junker* as a radical, he elaborated a Marxian version of the German illiberal tradition, epitomized by his celebrated contention that the seeming freedom of the West was illusory, a "repressive tolerance." Mass culture—a term the émigrés helped popularize in America—was not to be regarded as healthy evidence of the democratization of culture; it was an opiate designed to replace religion in the masses' ever-befuddled brains, a totalitarian instrument of ruling-class domination. Appalled by Hitler's manipulation of mass communications for propagandistic purposes, the refugees who studied mass culture (or, to use the Weimarian word, *Kitsch*) found sinister possibilities in even the most innocuous productions. Marcuse's Frankfurt colleagues

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Theodor Adorno and Erich Fromm would suggest the Nazi comparison in another way. America shared Germany's potential for fascism because the "authoritarian personality" was an inevitable by-product of the bourgeois family, a pathology intrinsic to the capitalist order. And, according to Adorno's tendentious profile, an authoritarian personality was, among other things, a right-winger who disliked modernism in the arts. He was thus able to discredit all his enemies with a single conceptual stroke.

These ideas show clear signs of their Weimarian origins. But the Frankfurt style of social-psychological ad hominem argumentation was also immensely appealing to an influential group of liberal American intellectuals who believed ideological disputation was outmoded in the postwar era and could produce nothing but Weimarian divisiveness, a threat to American stability and liberal consensus. They were thus inclined to discredit their opponents rather than dignify their arguments by rebuttal. When Richard Hofstadter pointed to the persistence of a "paranoid style" in American political culture, and when he ridiculed the Republican Right as "pseudo-conservatives" whose claims to uphold traditions were actually a smoke screen for their own fearful projectivity, he used nomenclature that he had lifted straight out of Adorno. When Daniel Bell and the five other contributors to *The New American Right* (1955) looked at the composition of right-wing and populist movements, they looked for the same basic social structure that had characterized the successful Nazi movement. The ghost of Weimar now stalked American politics and society, and it would continue to haunt our understanding of the political Right, and of populist reformers from William Jennings Bryan to Huey Long, for many years to come. Indeed, by the time the tumultuous 1960s arrived, and radicals of the New Left had begun to deploy the teachings of Marcuse against the authority of their liberal teachers, the America-as-Weimar analogy began to look like self-fulfilling prophecy.

That the intellectual legacy of Weimar in America, then, has been something less than an unmixed blessing seems beyond question. And that the time is ripe for reassessment is equally evident. It is therefore disappointing that the most recent general treatment of the subject, the sociologist Lewis Coser's book *Refugee Scholars in America*, passes up a golden opportunity to advance and deepen our understanding of the subject. The book, a collection of brief biographical sketches of the most prominent scholars in the social sciences and humanities, will certainly be useful to future writers on the subject, if for no other reason than its inclusiveness and handiness. But anyone hoping to find a new perspective on the subject will find that Coser—who is himself a German refugee—has broken no new ground, in either his facts or his interpretation.

What is worse, the book presents so external and mechanical an account of the movement and transfer of ideas that it makes the entire migration episode seem as dull as an academic conference—something one would never have thought possible. His is a form of intellectual history with the ideas themselves left out, which is rather like bathwater without the baby. Coser believes that intellectual history should concern itself primarily with "the interaction of human beings," concentrating on the "networks of influence and the interpersonal ties that came to link newcomers to those already settled in specific intellectual territories." As a result, some of his biographical sketches sound rather like their subject's curriculum vitae rendered in prose. In the case of Paul Oskar Kristeller, for example, we are told where he was born, where he was educated, where he taught, what the titles of his books are, who his American friends are, and so on—but we get no feeling whatever for the texture of the man's mind. Because Coser has gravitated toward "objective," quantifiable measures of a scholar's eminence, we hear much about such matters as prestigious chairs held, number of publications, number of references to said publications in tomes like the *Social Science Citation Index*, number of graduate students, professional awards received, and the like. All this is well and good, so far as it goes, but it is no substitute for the ideas themselves. Intellectual history ought to be more than professional shoptalk; it should dramatize how a thinker wrestles with reality, not merely how he commingles with his colleagues.

Oddly enough, Coser comes closest to accomplishing this in the sections on political and social thought, fields with which he

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has the greatest professional familiarity. His portraits of Leo Strauss, Hannah Arendt, Franz Neumann, Hans Morgenthau, the New School, and the Institute for Social Research contain a fair amount of intellectual substance. Unfortunately, though, he passes up opportunities left and right to break through to a more complex understanding of these thinkers and organizations. Sometimes he even misses the full significance of his own statements. In his sketch of Hannah Arendt, for example, he rightly observes that "[her] political thinking was largely shaped by her existential condition as an exile"—but he fails to consider whether her political judgment was also impaired by that same condition. On the next page, he notes that "Hannah Arendt, who never joined a political party, who rarely engaged in any political activities, nevertheless became one of the foremost exponents on the American scene of the idea of political freedom through involved participation in the arena of politics"—but he is not moved to wonder at this irony, or to ask whether she romanticized participatory politics precisely because she found herself temperamentally unable to participate.

But what one misses most in *Refugee Scholars in America*, as in every previous treatment of this subject, is a willingness on the part of the author to plant the book firmly in the soil of American history. In his preface, Coser asserts that his study "focuses not only on what the refugee intellectuals had to offer but also on the social and cultural conditions in the country of refuge." But the book in fact shows precious little interest in the latter conditions, and what little it does say remains closely bound up in the intramural doings of each particular academic discipline. If Coser is to persuade us that "the American mind was much stretched through its encounters with the refugee intellectuals," and if we are to be convinced that the refugees served to "deprovincialize the American mind and upgrade American culture," it will not do merely to record the interminglings of specialists. He must finally say something about the American mind—what it had been, precisely how it was changed, and why that change was so salutary. This requires a fundamentally different perspective, one rooted not in the bittersweet glories of Weimar culture, not in evocations of the refugees' "existential condition,"

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not in the structure of the specialized intellectual professions, but in American history.

Let me add that a national perspective is not the same as a nationalistic one. I am not recommending that one uncritical celebration be exchanged for another, although the very fact that one feels obliged to provide such a disclaimer says something about the automatic resistance an explicitly American perspective can be expected to face. But the question of "upgrading American culture" appears to be a good deal more complicated than Coser and other writers on the subject have assumed. It may be, in fact, the ever-eclectic Americans, by so eagerly appropriating the distinguished productions of foreigners, have not so much upgraded their culture as they have left it to languish in a perpetual state of arrested development. Lionel Trilling was pointing to just this dilemma when he observed, some thirty years ago, that "the American intellectual never so fully expressed his provincialism as in the way he submitted to the influence of Europe." And the only plausible remedy was suggested by the invincibly European George Santayana: "The more different [America] can come to be, the better; and we must let it take its own course, going a long way around, perhaps, before it can . . . learn to express itself simply, not apologetically, after its own heart." Excellent advice, but in the end, it seems always to go unheeded. For American culture has always had the good fortune—and the bad fortune—to be provided with a multitude of alluring shortcuts. And nowhere is this peculiarly American predicament more evident than in the ambiguous legacy of the illustrious German immigrants.

Thucydideses

THUCYDIDES. *By W. Robert Connor. Princeton University Press. $30.*

Reviewed by CLIFFORD ORWIN

A "postmodernist" reading of Thucydides, one that stresses its dependence on current literary theory? Yes, but don't worry. Here we have no reduction of text to "subtext," to "social text," to subconscious structures, to Salisbury steak. W. Robert Connor has written an excellent book, of the greatest assistance in approaching Thucydides. For all his up-to-dateness, his task is one of reconstruction, of the restoration of our sense of Thucydides as a supremely great writer. As for the "deconstruction" of Thucydides, that, alas, is an old story in the classics profession, one to which Connor seeks to write *finis*.

For a long time there prevailed, of course, what we may call the old-fashioned view of Thucydides (I do not use that term pejoratively). Here was the greatest of histories, one of the foremost achievements of the human mind. Its unity and consistency were hardly at issue. Since around 1850, however, the academic study of Thucydides has been awash in the so-called *Thukydidesfrage*. As its name suggests, this "Thucydidean question" was primarily a German question, but since the Germans dominated classical studies, scholars everywhere made it their own.

The "Thucydidean question" was that of the stages of the composition of his work. Here allegedly lay the key to explaining its many difficulties. If Thucydides seemed to say one thing here and something else there, that was because he wrote the first in (say) 427 B.C. and the second in (say) 404. In a work written over three decades, and which, even so, remained unfinished, one had to expect grave discrepancies.

The trouble with this approach was that its prophecy of rampant inconsistencies proved self-fulfilling. Interpretation—by which I mean the effort to display the coherence of the parts of a work and therefore its wholeness—fell from honor. As scholars busied themselves unearthing new evidence for this or that reduction of the work to fossil-bearing strata, its alleged inconsistencies multiplied. Thucydides ceased to exist, only Thucydideses remained: the one of 431, the one of 427, the one of 411, etc. The author had been replaced by a series of his phases of development.

Connor is neither the first, nor the first influential, scholar to try to restore what he calls a "unitarian" reading of Thucydides. He is, however, unusually effective at it, for he meets the "separatists" on their own ground. Like them, he focuses on the many stumbling blocks in the work: the shifts of perspective,

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the glaring omissions, the repetitions with a twist, the withholding or postponement of important facts, the fostering of expectations that are not met, the fits and starts, the odd anecdotes and puzzling digressions. According to Connor, however, these supposed blemishes are aspects of the work's perfection. Far from detracting from its unity, they evince the supreme artfulness of the means by which Thucydides achieves it. Does Thucydides provide, midway through his whole, a so-called "second preface," shedding new light on his interpretation of the war? A sure sign, say the separatists, that he has changed minds in the middle of the stream. Nonsense, says Connor.

> Nowhere is the domination of Thucydidean studies by "the Thucydidean question" . . . more evident or more pernicious. Separatist approaches to the work tend to divert attention from the literary effects of the work to alleged changes and modifications of the author's views. But if our analysis is correct, the issue is not the history of Thucydides' own thinking about the war, but the way in which the reader's understanding is directed and deepened.

Connor insists that the "inconsistencies" of Thucydides further a consistent intention; more, he contends that the way to it necessarily leads through them. "Unitarian" readings have tended to be one-dimensional, precisely because they have not done justice to the features invoked by the "separatists." The unity that Connor defends in Thucydides is richer, subtler, and more complex than that perceived by most other critics: it defies reduction to nostrums.

Connor's postmodernism means many things, but primarily a renewed attention to the reader's contribution to a book. (Here he follows such critics as Tzvetan Todorov and Wolfgang Iser.) "The involvement of the reader in the work is an essential part of its strategy. By witnessing and assessing the events and characters described by the author the readers are led to tune their own reactions to those of the text, and eventually to assimilate their attitudes to those of the author."

Perceptive readers have always recognized Thucydides' skill at involving the reader. So, for example, Thomas Hobbes, his greatest English translator, in 1629:

> Thucydides is one who, though he never digress to read a lecture, moral or political, upon his own text, . . . is yet accounted the most politic historiographer that ever writ. . . . He filleth his narrations with that choice of matter, and ordereth them with that judgment . . . that . . . he maketh his auditor a spectator. For he setteth his reader in the assemblies of the people and in the senate, at their debating; in the streets, at their seditions; and in the field, at their battles. So that look how much a man of understanding might have added to his experience, if he had then lived a beholder of their proceedings . . . : so much almost may he profit now. . . . He may from the narrations draw out lessons to himself.

It is the great merit of Connor's book that it shows us *how* Thucydides nudges us to "draw out lessons to [ourselves]."

> If the involvement of the reader in the text is as we have come to suspect, then it will repay us to look . . . very closely to determine Thucydides' expectations about his reader and the methods by which he shapes and guides his readers' responses. . . . If we suspect a progression in the reader's attitudes, then we should be prepared to consider the text itself as a progression, that is the first part of the work may reflect attitudes, assumptions, and ideas that are eventually modified, restated, subverted, or totally contraverted. The text need not be homogeneous to be systematic. The tensions, apparent inconsistencies, and variations may be part of a progression of thought and feeling.

Connor offers his start-to-finish commentary on the text as a test of this approach; and there is no denying that it succeeds splendidly. Again and again he takes up features that others have overlooked or dismissed or adduced as evidence of disunity, and shows that they are aspects of a thoroughly meditated whole. In his only personification of war, Thucydides describes it as a "violent teacher" (3.82). Thucydides, as Connor shows, is a gentle one. Nonetheless, what he sets out to do is to re-create his own education for us. The vicissitudes of his text, argues Connor, including even those of his prose style, mirror those of the experience of the war itself.

Thucydides, as Connor presents him, is a master of indirectness. Even his numerous explicit judgments, so often taken for authoritative as if they towered above the text, are, according to Connor, relative to their narrative contexts. They are intended to evoke reflection in the reader, not to preempt it.

One could cite dozens of examples of the

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strengths of Connor's approach. A good one is his treatment of Thucydides' alleged political partisanship. Some would have it that he was clearly a Periclean democrat; others that he no less clearly favored oligarchy. Hobbes maintained, as a minority of one, that "as [Thucydides] was of regal descent, so he best approved of the regal government." There is much to be said for each of these views; what better reason for doubting all of them? According to Connor, Thucydides leads us to flirt with both democrats and oligarchs, but not with the intention of wedding us to either. Rather, he raises expectations that neither succeeds in satisfying; coming to see with each in turn is a step toward seeing through each in turn. Thucydides' seemingly and even grossly partisan characterizations thus guide us to a nonpartisan perspective, free of the false hopes that attach to one faction or the other.

But it would be impossible to list all of the felicities of Connor's book. Readers will find much to admire, and scholars much to envy in it. By his own admission he offers not a full-fledged reading of the work, but enough of one to demonstrate how one should go about reading it. The conciseness of his book is another of its many virtues. Still, I often found myself sorry that he hadn't pressed further in this or that line of analysis, and it sometimes seemed that his chariness reflected more than his concern with brevity. There is, in particular, far greater depth to the speeches in the work than emerges from Connor's accounts of them. He may have felt uncomfortable at fishing for too much in the way of general reflection in a historian—he warns us (always good advice) against imposing "grander constructions" than the text will bear—or he may have found the water too chilly. I have in mind, above all, the problems of justice and piety, about which Thucydides shows much and Connor says very little.

For whatever reason, the substance of Connor's reading is not quite as satisfying as the principles of reading by which he arrives at it. His Thucydides seems to me a little *too* obliging to "postmodernist" (that is, post-Vietnam) political sensibilities: he is rich in both compassion and anxiety but low in iron. He is the apostle of peace and (above all) of caution. "Thucydides, an Athenian" (as he identifies himself in the very first words of his book) proves to teach a curiously Spartan lesson. There is something to this: diffident Sparta won the war (or rather soaring, surging Athens lost it). There is also, however, an Athenian side to Thucydides' wisdom. I mean his intellectual radicalism. Thucydides' presentation of the world is not merely sensible—although it is always that. It is also something else without which it could not be unfailingly sensible. On a wide range of matters about which we human beings tend to be smug—even we postmodern ones—Thucydides' teaching is deeply unsettling.

Yet Thucydides' perspective is also, for all of the horrors that it embraces, free of any trace of weariness. Connor's Thucydides is somewhat given to deploring (imperialism, for instance); that helps make him "postmodern": deploring is what we posties do best. While compelling in many other respects, Connor's Thucydides seems to me to lack the original's awe-inspiring strength of soul.

From a purely literary point of view, the commentator on Thucydides of whose approach Connor's most reminds me is the late Leo Strauss (*The City and Man*, 1964; reissued 1978). Strauss, who was largely responsible for the revival of interest in Thucydides among political scientists, has long been a non-person among classicists; he is evidently unknown to Connor. For Strauss, Thucydides' art of writing, which proceeded in large part as Connor indicates, was but one example of the profound subtlety of both substance and manner that distinguished the classical political thinkers, Plato, Xenophon, and others, as well as Thucydides. Strauss argued that this art of writing, never surpassed and rarely equaled, had now been almost entirely forgotten, along with the conception of the relation between thought and society that had informed it. The recovery of what these ancient writers had thought, a task rendered urgent by the impasse of modern philosophy, must therefore proceed hand in hand with that of the modes in which they had expressed it. These radical assertions, with all that they implied about the current state of understanding of the classics, won Strauss few friends among classicists.

Connor, for his part, has made an impressive contribution to the recovery of Thucydides' art and so of his thought. If postmodernism is what did it for him, then by all means send a case to our other scholars.

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Madly Victorian

THE BIRTH OF NEUROSIS: MYTH, MALADY AND THE VICTORIANS. *By George F. Drinka. Simon & Schuster. $21.95.*

Reviewed by MARK S. MICALE

The history of psychology and psychiatry is today a burgeoning area of inquiry in this country. The two shortcomings that marred so much of the earlier writing in this field—an internecine ideological battle between Whig, Marxist, and Foucaultian critics and a technical and formalist hermeticism limiting the literature to specialists—have been increasingly absent from the finest work in recent years. Hannah Decker, Andrew Scull, Paul Starr, Phyllis Grosskurth, Jan Goldstein, and Jeanne Peterson, among others, have of late provided an approach to the subject that is more subtle and accessible. In the diverse writings of these scholars, one finds a new type of medical historiography that is based on original archival research, shows a sophisticated sense of the extra-scientific context of medicine, and combines thorough descriptive exposition with first-rate analysis.

It is against this background of recent work in the field that one reads George F. Drinka's *The Birth of Neurosis: Myth, Malady and the Victorians.* Drinka's book provides a fast-paced tour through the strange and wondrous world of the nineteenth-century psychological sciences. The author presents a colorful account of the major ideas of the age about mental illness and its treatment, which made up what Drinka rather loosely describes as "Victorian medicine." Drinka has chapters on such wide-ranging topics as B. A. Morel's influential doctrines of heredity and degeneration; Hughlings Jackson's researches on epilepsy; Jean-Martin Charcot's dramatic theories of hysteria and hypnosis; Cesare Lombroso's ideas about criminal anthropology that relate brain size and facial features to antisocial behavior; the popular and pessimistic ideas of Max Nordau on cultural degeneration; George M. Beard's notion of neurasthenia; Richard von Krafft-Ebing's bestselling *Psychopathia Sexualis;* and the famous "rest

MARK S. MICALE, a junior fellow at the Harvard Society of Fellows, is currently working on an intellectual biography of Jean-Martin Charcot.

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cure" of Silas Weir Mitchell, the Philadelphia physician. The final two sections of the book deal with Pierre Janet and Freud. Other chapters cover specific controversies of the Victorian age, such as the extensive debate about genius and insanity (with particular attention to Wagner and Baudelaire) and the confrontation between the Catholic Church and the scientific establishment over such phenomena as faith healing and the pilgrimages to Lourdes in the 1880s. Patients appear as prominently in Drinka's book as doctors and doctrines. Throughout these pages one finds a full, picturesque gallery of classical Victorian cases: the overworked neurasthenic, the malingering hysteric, the effete masturbator, the chronic and spinsterish invalid, and the wealthy, itinerant *malade imaginaire* with his or her travels from doctor to doctor, from seaside resort to Alpine sanatorium.

Drinka's treatment of his subject is in a number of ways useful and admirable. His presentation of nineteenth-century ideas and controversies is thorough and technically accurate. The scope of the book is ambitious, the bibliography very full. Throughout the work, he relies on an imaginative mixture of medical texts, case histories, contemporary literature, and cultural-historical sources. Drinka possesses also a fine sensitivity to "national styles" in the medical sciences during the Victorian age, and he does an excellent job of exposing the covert moralizing—the subtle and self-serving move from descriptive to prescriptive discourse—in many of these allegedly objective writings. As a quick but kaleidoscopic review of the pre-Freudian psychological world, *The Birth of Neurosis* is a successful study.

Beyond this relatively basic claim, however, one runs into serious problems with the book. I believe both the specialist and the intelligent amateur reader will finally be frustrated by Drinka's handling of his material. To begin with, the author's familiarity with the historical background of his subject appears slight (the first sentence of the book confuses the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune of 1871), and the work contains a disconcerting number of misspellings and factual errors. The numerous "myths" about man and mind that Drinka discerns in the Victorian period—the myth of the Angelic Invalid, the myth of the Religious Tormentor, the myth of Degenerate Genius, and so on—operate, in the end, less as enlightening simplifications than as cultural caricatures. And, as a glance at the endnotes reveals, the detailed information presented in section after section of the book is largely derived from only the most basic secondary sources in the field. Except for a very interesting chapter on the exportation of Beard's neurasthenia concept to France and Germany, the study appears to show evidence of little original research. The impression persists that both author and audience would have been better served if Drinka had chosen one from among his many topics and given it a fuller and fresher treatment.

Equally problematic is the fact that Drinka never fully defines his subject. Despite the prominence of neurosis in the title, Drinka neglects to establish exactly what either he or his Victorian counterparts considered neurotic behavior. Neurasthenia, hysteria, epilepsy, common nervousness, certain sexual practices, and a host of other phenomena, by virtue of inclusion in the book, are lumped under the collective designation *neuroses*. This oversight is particularly lamentable given the outstanding example of such other works in the field as Oswei Temkin's *The Falling Sickness*, with its rigorously delimited concept of epilepsy since antiquity, and J. M. López-Piñero's *Historical Origins of the Concept of Neurosis*, which carefully traces the various meanings of the term *neurosis* through generations of usage. To write "the history of a disease" is an extremely elusive enterprise. (Is the historian attempting to produce an account of what Lester King calls "the organic disease entity" itself? Or, of the evolving medical understanding of that natural entity? Or, of the extra-scientific factors causing different manifestations of the illness?) A project of such complexity requires from the outset a discriminating definition of the subject at hand.

The most frustrating aspect of the work, though, concerns its doggedly descriptive nature. Drinka reviews medical theories, presents historical data, and narrates case histories and the plots of novels; but he rarely moves from exposition to interpretation. As a result, while the reader senses that the stuff of the story is inherently fascinating, much of the writing in the book comes off as chatty and inconsequential. Time and again, it seemed, at least to this reader, that the most interesting and

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urgent questions emerging from the author's material were either dismissed with commonplace conclusions or ignored altogether.

Let me give a few examples of what I believe to be the pertinent issues. Perhaps the single greatest contribution of nineteenth-century theorists to the intellectual history of psychology was the concept of an intermediate form of mental illness. For centuries, the schema of human mental functioning was totally polarized: there existed, on the one hand, the damned and incurable madman who required permanent institutionalization and, on the other, the outside world of "normal" people with their occasional eccentricities of character. By the middle of the 1800s, however, the notion of less severe forms of psychopathology (that is, the idea of the neuroses) had begun to emerge. How did this shift in medical perception come about? Why, one is entitled to ask, was a wide range of nonpsychotic patterns of behavior suddenly seen to constitute illness? Or, to put the question in therapeutic terms, how did the psychoanalytic couch and outpatient clinic come to be interposed between the insane asylum and the world of everyday society? This new development was of considerable import and would eventually lead to the rather discomforting Freudian idea that we are all more or less sick—to what Philip Rieff has called our "hospital culture." The changes in scientific understanding and social sensibility that lay behind this new outlook are not explored in Drinka's study.

Another question in all of this concerns the theoretical status of the mental sciences in the late nineteenth century. My own sense after reading through these chapters is that basic theory in the field was quite impoverished during the Victorian period. With the rise of German materialist psychologies at midcentury, virtually all forms of mental illness were believed to have purely organic bases, such as spinal lesions or cerebral tumors, which had been caused by either physical shocks or hereditary defect. The essential diagnostic exercise at this time was the postmortem search for structural abnormalities. In essence, where an authentic psychology might have been (that is, psychological explanations for what were potentially both psychological and physiological symptoms), there were only neuroanatomy and neuro-

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physiology. According to such exponents of this outlook as Theodor Meynert and Emil Kraepelin, the possible etiological significance of purely emotional experiences was dismissed as too vague and unscientific, a throwback to what George Rosen has termed "Romantic medicine" in an age of hard-nosed positivism.

In some of the more engaging pages of the book, Drinka does show how a number of remarkable figures in the field, working in different settings and at various levels of sophistication, began to move toward the idea of ideogenesis—that is, toward the not entirely self-evident notion that an idea or passion could carry a pathogenic charge and lead to a physical or behavioral disorder. Charcot, for instance, became interested by the late 1880s in such subjective mental phenomena as hypnotic suggestion and faith healing and posited the idea of a "functional lesion" without an organic correlative. Along parallel lines, Beard and Mitchell wrote perceptively on the exclusively emotional influence of the doctor over the patient. While these pre-psychogenic insights appear significant in retrospect, surely what is most striking is that these researchers were, in the end, unable to shed their strict neurological training. They either failed to recognize the theoretical significance of their own discoveries or retreated under pressure to a safely somatist position. Even though the work of these pioneers was admirable, the vast majority of their professional peers was content for decades to accept the orthodox medical materialism of the day. For a genuinely psychological view of the psyche—for a theory of mind rather than a model of the brain—one must wait until the 1890s, for Janet's work on the idées fixes (or past traumatic memories that operate as obsessions) and for Freud's concept of conversion symptoms. Indeed, one takes away from Drinka's book the recurrent realizations of how few men before the turn of the century thought in new or daring ways about the nature and causes of mental illness and what an act of speculative boldness was involved in Freud's formulation of a comprehensive depth psychology.

Similarly, the traveler in this terrain might spend some time investigating the social and cultural context of medicine in the Victorian period. One thing that becomes abundantly clear in *The Birth of Neurosis* is that the patients a hundred years ago were not the only ones doing the suffering. Throughout the writing of the Victorian period, the sense of real social fear, of a constant cultural alarmism, is extremely high. However diversified the varieties of neurotic experience, they shared at least two qualities: they were all distinctly modern afflictions, and they were all most decidedly on the rise. For instance, Morel's doctrine of hereditary degeneration, a type of family-based neurological fatalism, projected the exponential spread of crime, debauchery, and dipsomania throughout society. Innumerable studies, especially on the Continent, purported to show that insanity was on the increase. According to Nordau's influential book, cultural degeneration of all sorts was spreading cancerously through European society; its greatest symptoms were avant-garde art and literature. Beard's notion of neurasthenia, a sort of Victorian "burnout," attributed this new nervous exhaustion to overwork and the stresses of the modern urban world. In both the popular and medical imagination of the time, the ominous appearance of these disorders became a question of urgent public hygiene. A large and (to us) often hilarious literature arose to address the problem, including such volumes as Jules Lafage's *Nervosisme au XIXè siècle* (1882) and Henri Labonne's *Comment on se défend des maladies nerveux: la lutte contre la neurasthénie et les névroses* (1892).

It is all too easy to find these writings merely amusing or to dismiss them as bad science. But surely the real issue here concerns the role these beliefs played in the subjective social perceptions of the day. It seems clear enough that much of this writing can be read not only as scientific discourse but as a kind of anti-modernist cultural criticism. As Drinka points out in passing in his remarks on Beard, both the readers and the writers of these books responded with apprehension to the modern, mechanized metropolises forming across Europe and America and came to believe that they were generating their own forms of disease and disorder. The old familiar world, with its fixed social hierarchy, established sexual roles, and hallowed moral certainties, was being replaced by a new and dynamic society never seen before. What Walter Houghton once called "the velocity of life"

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was increasing tremendously, uncontrollably, under the influence of modern technology, and the human nervous system was quite literally being torn apart in the process. Furthermore, in an increasingly secularized world, it was medical psychology rather than religion or philosophy that could provide the most compelling models and metaphors for explaining the effects of these changes on human behavior. The medical textbook and the case history, then, as much as the novel, the political tract, and the newspaper editorial, can be seen as expressions of the dominant cultural anxieties of the day.

A final theme here that is aching to be explored concerns the ultimate clinical integrity of the neurotic forms themselves. What, the historian might wonder, has happened in our century to such classically "Victorian" specimens as the hysteric with her fits and fainting spells, the neurasthenic with his delicate nerves, the degenerate with his or her family taint? This is the difficult question of what Philippe Ariès has called "fashionable diseases" in history. We have long known that a wide range of actions and behaviors can be conditioned by environmental variables. Yet is it possible as well that there exist certain culturally sanctioned and historically determined manifestations of psychopathology? Can highly distinctive mental and physical symptoms be learned individually and prescribed socially? How are we to explain, finally, the curiously episodic quality of these clinical phenomena, appearing as they did roughly in the middle of the 1800s and then vanishing by the First World War?

Drinka's explanation is to dismiss the matter as the unhappy result of a repressive moral and sexual code. This, of course, is an old and familiar response. But surely the situation is more complicated. A number of cultural historians have drawn parallels between these new maladies and the steamy, flamboyant worlds of Paris and Vienna. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and other scholars working in women's studies have recently suggested that some of these ailments were unconscious strategies on the part of women to fight against an oppressively patriarchal world that forced on them both relentless domestic stresses and a feminine ideal of frailty and subordination. There is, no doubt, an element of truth in these speculations.

Another important factor in operation here,

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and one, I believe, that has been almost totally ignored, concerns the effect of a process that might be called nosological inflation. It is necessary to remember that both neuropathology and clinical psychiatry were just coming into being during the Victorian age as autonomous medical sub-disciplines. An extensive array of behavioral phenomena previously accounted for by religion, metaphysics, or other branches of medicine was now beginning to be described with terms borrowed from these other areas of inquiry. These disciplinary shifts involved, among other things, fundamental alterations in the basic nosology, or classification of diseases, in the fields. Beginning in roughly the 1860s, the old vocabulary of manias, melancholias, dementias, and deliriums was increasingly replaced by a new nomenclature. In a development that can be carefully documented, an ever-broader range of symptoms and syndromes was assigned to such disorders as hysteria and neurasthenia until eventually, in about the 1890s, these words had become meaningless diagnostic catchalls. Several decades later, when these "culture-bound" diseases were disappearing mysteriously from the medical textbooks, many of the same symptoms were being absorbed into the new clinical categories of the psychoses. What appeared to be fashionable fluctuations in the prevalence of certain diseases were, in fact, at least partly, only changes in the explanatory power of new fields of knowledge and the expansion and contraction of diagnostic labels. The final question one arrives at, then, may be: In formulating an adequate history of psychology for any period, how much emphasis should be put on the underlying organic elements as opposed to the social, cultural, material, and terminological factors at work?

Answers to these questions—indeed, the questions themselves—are often fatally absent from Drinka's book. Scant on analysis and with no effective conclusion to relate Victorian medicine to the psychology of our own century, *The Birth of Neurosis* gives us only a colorful collection of stories about a bygone era. Despite its successful aspects, this is, finally, medical historiography as a kind of pre-scientific folklore for the amusement of contemporary readers. If the history of the mental sciences as a discipline is to continue the impressive growth it has shown in recent years, it must, in fact, avoid three pitfalls: the temptation to anecdotal reductionism as well as the limitations of hyperspecialization and of ideological factionalism.

Frozen Custer

SON OF THE MORNING STAR: CUSTER AND THE LITTLE BIGHORN. *By Evan S. Connell. North Point Press. $20.*

Reviewed by ALAN SHAPIRO

With fourteen books to his credit, in a variety of genres, including short story, novel, poetry, biography, and essay, Evan S. Connell has developed a devoted, almost cultish following of readers over the years, and I am pleased to count myself as one of them. His finest work, the two companion novels, *Mrs. Bridge* and *Mr. Bridge*, are American classics, exploring with great tact and insight upper-middle-class American life between the Depression and World War II. If Connell had written only these two novels, his reputation would be secure. So, if it was with great excitement that I opened the pages of his new book, *Son of the Morning Star: Custer and the Little Bighorn*, it was with even greater disappointment and surprise that I found the book so utterly tedious. A very fine writer taking on one of the most controversial episodes of our national past—what could go wrong? Perhaps those were Custer's own last words as he rode into the valley of the Little Bighorn.

Son of the Morning Star begins two days after Custer's last stand when General Alfred Terry and his men entered the deserted Indian village near the site of the massacre. The book concludes with an attempt to reconstruct from the position of the corpses how and when Custer and the men around him died. In the body of the book, we are given not only or primarily a biography of Custer, but a history of the Plains Wars, of white and Indian relations, culminating in the Army's 1876 campaign to remove all Sioux and Cheyenne Indians from the Dakota Territories eight years after signing the Laramie Treaty in which those very lands were legally made theirs.

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Beginning with the aftermath of the battle and concluding with the battle itself is an artful strategy, creating some measure of suspense, for as we read through all the intervening pages we are made anxious for the last act in which the crucial characters, conditioned by the terrible history the book supplies, are brought together. The book, however, is not as artful as it ought to be, and what suspense and interest this larger frame creates is undermined by the absence of any order within it. The book moves back and forth without reason between a general history of the West and a particular history of the men involved in the Little Bighorn episode.

Connell affects a low-key, conversational style, almost as though his were an oral, not a written, history. The conversational elements—the earthy diction, the offhand tone and concern for anecdote and ordinary detail—extend even to the organization of the telling. Just as it is the nature of casual conversation to drift associatively from subject to subject, so Connell digresses endlessly, sometimes aimlessly, unable to tell one story without telling several others at the same time, allowing details and incidents, biographical sketches and analytical asides to wander through the book in a loose, haphazard manner. The assumption behind this may be that since history is random and chaotic, the telling of history itself must be random and chaotic so as not to falsify one's subject. But history without a mastering intelligence is boring—and it is a mastering intelligence that is missing here.

My hunch is that the book's looseness is a kind of overcompensation for Connell's impulse to fictionalize, by which I mean the tendency to impose some sort of design or form upon his historical materials. For design is the soul of art, especially the kind of art Connell practices so well in his novels, particularly in *Mrs. Bridge* and *Mr. Bridge*, where every scene is clearly yet delicately pointed. Of course, history isn't art exactly, but insofar as the writing of history involves selecting and shaping one's material, history is inextricably bound up with art, and one could argue that the historians who compel the most attention—Gibbon, say, and Burckhardt—are those who write most artfully, whose manner and matter are actively intertwined. Design in the broadest sense, includ-

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ing narrative elements as well as stylistic choices, can operate as a kind of lense that brings some aspects of reality into significant focus by eliminating others. Form can distort, and too much form can eliminate the experience it's attempting to present, severing certain strands of an event from the larger historical fabric that gives the event its peculiar meaning. But form also reveals and interprets. It's not that Connell neglects to make stylistic choices in *Son of the Morning Star*, but rather that the stylistic choices he does make can, for the most part, only passively reflect his subject. They don't allow him to interpret or analyze with any rigor, or to distinguish relevant from irrelevant details.

The opening chapter is a case in point. After he describes what General Terry and his men discovered as they rode through the deserted Indian village, listing the various artifacts they came upon—a soldier's bloody shirt, a studded mirror, a mail sack full of letters—Connell gives a brief biographical sketch of this or that dead soldier. He describes Major Reno's wounded troops, and he recalls details of Reno's battle with the Indians and his quick retreat, and he raises the famous controversy over whether Reno panicked and thereby made it possible for the Indians to obliterate Custer and his men, or whether by retreating he prevented an even larger massacre. Connell then gives a brief account of Reno's Civil War experience and explains how it may have predisposed him to panic here; then he sketches the life of Bloody Knife, a Ree scout who died in the retreat. Connell goes on to give a brief history of Ree and Sioux relations, then details the life of Lonesome Charley, Custer's favorite scout, who had a suppurating thumb and died near Lieutenant David McIntosh, who was so ugly that when a fellow officer paid a visit to his wife she said, "My God," throwing up her hands, "you are the first man I ever saw that is uglier than my husband." Connell then mentions a Major Brisbon who wrote an account of the retreat under another name and who was known as "Grasshopper Jim" because he talked incessantly of agricultural possibilities in Montana where, Connell goes on to add in some detail, grasshoppers were devastating crops; Connell then returns to the retreat, weighing the reliability of this or that eyewitness account, and so on, to the end of the chapter, and for another four hundred pages.

The structure comes right out of *Tristram Shandy* or Mark Twain's "The Story of the Old Ram." The glut of details and anecdotes (interesting as some of them may be) and the habitual digressions end up obscuring the events they are intended to present so thoroughly. Because no hierarchy of interest informs Connell's attention, trivial and serious incidents and details are given equal emphasis, and the effect is a chilling dullness.

Connell is best when he concentrates for several pages on a single character or subject. His portraits of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse are very moving, especially his account of Sitting Bull's later years, when he was selling his autograph to Easterners and touring with Buffalo Bill's Wild West extravaganza. Connell also gives very funny and sympathetic portraits of Captain Benteen and Major Reno, the officers in charge of the other two battalions in the Little Bighorn battle, both of whom were Civil War veterans, alcoholics, and hard-luck cases generally, and they represent the kind of men who won the West—the brutal edge of what Connell calls "the white tide of manifest destiny." Connell also presents with entertaining immediacy what life in the western territories was like for ordinary soldiers, the vast majority of whom were alcoholics (like their commanding officers) and either physically or mentally gimped in one way or another. At Fort Yuma, the monotony of life was so extreme that, when soldiers were not fighting Indians or each other (brass knuckles were referred to as "drinking jewelry"), they would amuse themselves by organizing wars between red and black ants. Sexual amusement was confined to laundresses, many of whom were syphilitic. At Fort Lincoln, one of the most peculiar laundresses was Mrs. Nash, who invariably wore a veil or a shawl pinned beneath her chin. Her next-to-last husband was known as a jolly fellow until he married her. Her last husband, though, Private Noonan, lived with her quite happily until she became sick and died, and it was discovered that Mrs. Nash was in fact a man. Shortly thereafter, Private Noonan shot himself to death. "So," Connell wryly observes, "despite the monotonous drama of frontier life, there might be startling intermissions."

Connell's fine eye for complexity of charac-

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ter makes his treatment of Custer the most engaging feature of the book. Flamboyant in his dress and manners, Custer was nothing if not a man of contradictions. Best known as an Indian fighter, he was, according to Connell, notoriously inept at waging battle, making up in utter fearlessness for what he lacked in military expertise. In fact, that he is America's most legendary warrior is all the more astonishing when one discovers that his military record in the Civil War, as well as in the West, is, for the most part, undistinguished. A fanatical disciplinarian throughout his career, he was famous for disobeying his superiors. And his ruthless treatment of his own troops went hand in hand with an almost preternatural sympathy for animals. During the Black Hills Expedition in 1874, for example, Custer converted the regiment's one hospital tent into a dining hall for his staff and used the best ambulance to transport all his recent zoological acquisitions, which included two owls, one hawk, several toads, three rattlesnakes, and a petrified tree trunk—and all this while many of his soldiers were dying of pleurisy and diarrhea. As Connell puts it, "The general who would order an enlisted man whipped for a negligible offense could be uncommonly solicitous of a dog."

What Custer did possess was a knack for self-promotion. Through his memoir, *My Life on the Plains*, he marketed himself as a great frontiersman and Indian fighter to an American audience hungry for national heroes. Yet, despite his assiduous efforts to glorify his own experience, his military career was so uneven that had it not been for the Little Bighorn massacre he probably would not have been remembered. Connell suggests that the poems and paintings and biographies that the Little Bighorn generated transmuted Custer from the swashbuckling incompetent he was into one of our most illustrious American heroes, a cross between Errol Flynn and Thor. Connell is very good at teasing out the complexities of the man and at distinguishing the man from the legend.

Yet even Connell's portrait of Custer is marred somewhat by extraneous material, by a propensity for digression and an unwillingness to focus attention on the subject more rigorously. *Son of the Morning Star* would have been more successful had it attempted less—had, for example, Connell concentrated

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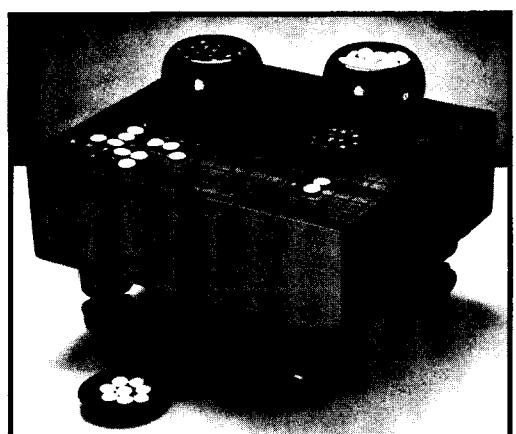

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more exclusively on Custer and Sitting Bull—instead of trying to encompass every aspect of white and Indian relations in the nineteenth century. Connell fails to assimilate and shape coherently the vast bulk of material his meticulous research has brought together. It's as though he has given us a great number of beads and said, "Here, you string them." Some of the beads are lovely, some are entertaining, some are perceptive and moving, but the good ones are too often obstructed by the bad. Sad: a missed opportunity for what might have been a great American book.

Brought to Book

IVY: THE LIFE OF I. COMPTON-BURNETT. *By Hilary Spurling. Knopf. $22.95.*

Reviewed by ROBERT LEITER

Hilary Spurling's life of the great British novelist I. Compton-Burnett is scrupulously detailed, crisply written, filled with brief, well-reasoned analyses of Compton-Burnett's eccentric, shockingly dispassionate novels; and yet, despite these solid virtues, the biography is often a trial to read.

Why this should be so strikes at the heart of recent developments in the art of biography. Over the past twenty years, we have become accustomed to the blockbuster, or laundry-list, biography, awash in a mass of undigested, unnecessary facts. *Ivy* is not such a work, though it has elements common to the genre. It is repetitious and overly long.

But the problem is far more complex. That a biography of Compton-Burnett would be written—despite the novelist's wishes to the contrary—had apparently been a given throughout British literary society. By the end of her long life, Compton-Burnett was a legend, partly because she made no references to her past. Admirers of her work, hungry for biographical details, had to take solace in the gossip that made the rounds of London.

With the publication of each new Compton-Burnett novel, the mystique deepened. Her works use few narrative devices other than dialogue and are variations on a single theme—domestic tyranny. Concerned with the submerged violence in families, the novels examine, "with hard, dry, unblinking realism," the most "explosive passions"—greed, lust, rage, jealousy.

A further layer of mystery was added once photos of Compton-Burnett were circulated. Readers expected the novelist to conform to their concept of an ardent and advanced modernist, but what the photos showed was someone resembling a forbidding nineteenth-century governess. There was something aloof and inscrutable about Ivy Compton-Burnett; and, as Spurling notes, she "took pains to produce this impression," which was as stylized as the dialogue in her fiction.

For the British, then, Spurling would seem to have fulfilled a sacred duty. Yet what the author failed to do was heed Compton-Burnett's admonitions about biography. When Ivy Compton-Burnett was asked in an interview whether she had ever considered writing her life story, she replied, "No, I think there'd be so much I wouldn't want to reveal. I don't mean important things, but all sorts of hundreds of little things that everybody keeps to himself." Spurling considers this a defense, a taunt to meddlers and would-be biographers. Rather than trying to comprehend these words, she has simply gone ahead and disclosed all the secrets Miss Compton-Burnett had been hard-pressed to keep hidden.

The most substantial revelations come in the first half of the biography, where the story of Ivy Compton-Burnett's first thirty-five years is meticulously recorded. The novelist's father, James, was a physician, who at the start of his career broke with the conventional medical practices of his day and embraced homeopathy. As a furious polemicist and outstanding diagnostician, he soon became one of the leaders in his field, while continuing to demonstrate his "keen resentment of received authority."

Dr. Burnett's first wife, Agnes, bore him six children in rapid succession, then died in childbirth on September 8, 1882. The following year James Burnett married Ivy's mother, Katharine Rees. (It was Katharine who added the hyphen to the family name.) The family did not live, as some readers of the novels imagined, on an ancestral country estate but rather in staid, middle-class Hove, which was,

ROBERT LEITER's work has appeared in the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, *Commonweal*, *Dissent*, and many other journals.

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at the turn of the century, nothing more than a decaying fishing village with a hundred citizens. However, the Compton-Burnetts lived much like the characters in a Compton-Burnett novel, in "a large, sequestered Victorian household permitting small contact with people outside it, staffed by domestics who all slept under its roof, and run to a rigid timetable that divided parents and children, masters and servants. . . ."

Ivy Compton-Burnett was born in 1884, her brother Guy a year later. The two were inseparable, were "like twins," as she said. They were ringleaders in the nursery, joined soon after by their brother Noel and four younger sisters. When she was fourteen, Miss Compton-Burnett was sent to a High Church school. The experience was a severe emotional shock. For the first time she was

> detached from her brothers and from the mutual security, protection and imaginative sympathy that had enclosed her from infancy. And we know that about the time when she went to school she was already beginning to assume at will a mask impenetrable outside the family circle. It is precisely this mask of frivolous indifference, assumed with such gaiety and grace in face of catastrophe which has caused so much difficulty to readers who find in I. Compton-Burnett a disconcerting heartlessness.

The catastrophes came rapidly. In April of 1901, two months before Ivy's seventeenth birthday, her father died of a heart attack while in London. "It had been so joyous till then," Vera Compton-Burnett told Spurling. "The sun suddenly went out." Katharine openly lamented her husband's passing, giving in to "spectacular displays of nervous irritation"; and the older children were asked to bear the brunt of their mother's considerable grief. Guy saw to her emotional needs as well as to the comfort and security of his younger sisters.

But when Guy died suddenly of pneumonia, the gloom in the Compton-Burnett household thickened. Ivy found her brother's death nearly unbearable and failed to face up to the pain of it at any time in her long life. Nor was she able, as Guy had been, "to give their mother either consolation or intimacy." Noel stepped in to be his mother's comforter and Ivy's "inseparable companion." But Mrs. Compton-Burnett's demands grew worse with the onset of her deafness, rheumatism, and the cancer that eventually killed her.

In her will, Katharine designated that her eldest child act as head of the household. Ivy complied but, unlike her mother, never made scenes. She was a tyrant whose "rule was quiet, orderly and cruel." She made life impossible for her sisters, two of whom, Topsy and Primrose, eventually fled and committed suicide together. This was in 1917, a year after Noel died in the Great War. In 1918, Ivy Compton-Burnett suffered from influenza and lay for months in "a state of extreme debility, unable to read or write."

By then Miss Compton-Burnett was living in a London flat. To help pass the time she took up needlework and decided to cover the seats of two chairs. The patterns she used were chosen for her by Margaret Jourdain who was forty-three years old, eight years Ivy's senior, and a formidable presence in the London social and literary worlds. Her book, *History of English Secular Embroidery*, had appeared in 1910, and she was considered an expert on furniture and period decorations.

At the time of their meeting, both women were at loose ends and realized from the start that in the other they had found "a convenient solution to their respective problems of where and with whom to live." From Ivy Compton-Burnett's point of view, Margaret Jourdain offered the advantage of having no connection with the "miseries and mistakes of the past."

The friendship restored Miss Compton-Burnett's emotional balance "to the point at which she could begin to scrutinize the present through the mirror of the past." According to Hilary Spurling, she "never again attempted to recreate the position of authority thrust on her in her last four years at Hove. From now on her interest in the way people prey on one another was confined to the strictly intellectual pleasures of observation." She began to write again, and the first of her novels in what has become recognized as her characteristic mode, *Pastors and Masters*, appeared in 1925.

In its particulars, Ivy Compton-Burnett's life is fascinating, and Spurling tells the story well. Yet Miss Compton-Burnett, in her comments on biography, may have been prophetic. If Spurling's raison d'être was to reveal the various skeletons lingering in the Compton-Burnett closets, then she has added very little to our knowledge. A close reading

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of Ivy Compton-Burnett's work would have told us as much. Of course, we could not have known all the particulars, but in the end Spurling's ticking off of the names and dates surrounding each fresh death and suicide doesn't really provide us with any new insights into the novels.

At one point in her life, Miss Compton-Burnett was approached about writing her memoirs; she dismissed the notion, saying that a life as uneventful as hers offered no biographical material. This is Ivy Compton-Burnett being disingenuous, especially in light of her family history. But the comment does apply to her later years and, by extension, to the second half of Miss Spurling's biography. Once Margaret Jourdain and Ivy Compton-Burnett set up house in Kensington, Spurling has very little to offer other than a string of publication dates and descriptions of tea parties. She is successful in diagnosing Miss Compton-Burnett's relationship with Margaret Jourdain, which was complex and sometimes sad, especially during Miss Jourdain's last illness. But, as Ivy Compton-Burnett suspected, nothing much happens here. Miss Spurling can use the Compton-Burnett novels to make incisive comments about the novelist's past, but what she cannot tell us—and no biographer could—is how the writer achieved her brilliant effects, how she decided upon a style at once familiar and yet so startlingly new.

In both halves of the biography, Hilary Spurling (out of conscientiousness rather than miscalculation) tells us more than anyone needs to know about the life and times of I. Compton-Burnett. There is too much about everything—genealogy, homeopathic medicine, Ivy's smart set of friends—so that the book swells until it is at least twice as long as it needs to be. Too often the focus strays from Ivy Compton-Burnett and settles on others, a technique that eventually wears the reader down. Perhaps the greatest excess comes in Hilary Spurling's discussion of Compton-Burnett's first novel, *Delores*, which was privately published fourteen years before *Pastors and Masters*. The novelist herself would seem to have provided the definitive statement about the work, consigning it to the category of "youthful agonies." Even Miss Spurling describes the book as a "thoroughly misconceived homage to George Eliot," a dark, turgid affair lacking any trace of the ebullience and oblique wit characteristic of Miss Compton-Burnett's later style.

This, however, does not stop Hilary Spurling from devoting fifty-four pages to discussing a work that her subject found embarrassing. Granted, *Delores* tells us much about Miss Compton-Burnett's early struggles as a novelist and about her life and ideas at the time, but all of this information might easily have been summarized in one-third the space, if not less.

Hilary Spurling does avoid two of the major hazards that have cursed many recent biographies: she does not psychoanalyze Ivy Compton-Burnett, nor does she end up hating or otherwise demeaning her. Yet because she has not heeded her subject's words, her book seems to stand at the furthest remove from Ivy Compton-Burnett's own philosophy and manner. This is not to suggest that a biographer of a great writer must have a similar prose style, which would be absurd. But Miss Spurling is at a real disadvantage here, for she is dealing with one of the great experimentalists of the twentieth century. Whenever Ivy Compton-Burnett is quoted, the passages come as a pleasing shock; and Hilary Spurling's prose, even when first-rate, suffers by comparison. Again, no one asks that a biographer be a match, artistically, for his subject. But Miss Spurling's extensive quotations make us all too aware that our time and energy might better be spent reading the novels.

Allison and Busby publishers (distributed in America by Schocken) have recently printed six Ivy Compton-Burnett novels in attractive paperback volumes. Viking Penguin has also published several other titles, and Oxford has issued *Manservant and Maidservant*, which is considered by many to be the author's masterpiece. It is here, among these astonishing novels, that readers, especially those unfamiliar with Ivy Compton-Burnett, should begin, for as Anthony Powell said of this extraordinary novelist, "No writer was ever more completely of her books, and her books of her."

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The Reader Replies . . . . . .

Behind the Blue Pencil

As a copy editor *and* writer, I was greatly dismayed by Jacques Barzun's article in the most recent issue of AMERICAN SCHOLAR. I would be the first to admit that there are plenty of lousy copy editors out there; what profession is free from incompetents and charlatans? All of us have had dealings with a plumber who made the leaky shower worse or a shoemaker who hopelessly ruined a pair of shoes he was only asked to reheel. That's life. I am frankly surprised that someone of Mr. Barzun's intellectual stature would waste his time by putting such gripes into print. His insulting generalizations about the background, intelligence, temperament, and sensitivity of copy editors are so grandiose as to make me wonder whether, in fact, he has had much firsthand experience with them at all or whether he is merely lumping together all the complaints he's ever heard about the worst in the business. It is simply not true, for instance, that experienced copy editors are people with no greater qualifications than "good eyesight" and the ability to "learn a routine," nor does any decent copy editor regard the writer as "suspect."

In driving home his point, Mr. Barzun has singled out examples from the work of mediocre copy editors who err on the side of the pedantic. (And in the list of alterations made on his own work, the appropriateness of at least half is impossible to judge without viewing the context in which those changes appear.) He has also, though subtly, misrepresented this part of the publishing process. Any professional author knows that the copy editor's "changes" are not writ in stone; a copy edited book manuscript is always returned—via the house editor—to the author, who may take and/or leave those alterations as he wishes. (That is why copy editors work in *pencil*.) In other words, the author has the power of veto. If this is not Mr. Barzun's experience, he would be well advised to change publishers.

I have come to discover that the authors who react with rage to my work are the egomaniacs and the greenhorns, especially the more illiterate of the bunch (one first-time author who could hardly construct a logical sentence ranted to his editor that I was like "a meter maid out to give her quota of parking tickets"). Those, on the other hand, who react with some measure of gratitude—even mentioning me in the acknowledgements on occasion—are the most seasoned, articulate authors. Is this because I bulldoze over the former, while treating the latter with kid gloves? Not usually. In fact, the reason for this discrepancy is that the better authors take my "changes" for what they are: friendly suggestions. Their egos are not easily bruised, because they understand that we copy editors are not paid to tell them what we like but, in effect, what we don't. This may lead to our reputation as schoolmarms and prigs, but it does not mean there is no artistry to our work. A good copy editor does *not* "ruin rhetoric" or "spoil rhythm"; will never "standardize" or "flatten out" the author's special style but, rather, will try to help him remain true to that style. (If an author takes exception to such minutiae as a particular dictionary's spellings or the insertion of serial commas, let me point out that these issues are determined by the publishing house and are rarely the choice, or the "fault," of the copy editor.) As a writer, I know full well how concentration can lapse; how the *mot juste* can be relentlessly elusive; how one can blindly overlook small but embarrassing inconsistencies and pointless repetitions. I am relieved when someone with an objective eye can point out such weaknesses and suggest improvements. The house editor, by the time he has seen an author through months of manuscript preparation, does not have this fresh viewpoint. Mr. Barzun's idea of handing the manuscript over to an outside "experienced writer-editor" is a good one but highly unrealistic; the cost of such services is rarely in the budget.

Recently, I have had the privilege of working with an accomplished author-journalist whose work Mr. Barzun himself has praised. This writer has been composing a series of reports that do not require him to go through the editorial process, as they are for a government agency. According to Mr. Barzun's point of view, he should be overjoyed, but he chooses to hire me—paying me out of his own pocket—because he knows the value of that objective eye. When I returned a typescript to him last week, obscured by a thicket of suggested changes

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and queries (which we *do* write on flags attached to the margins), he called me up to say how pleased he was. Naturally, he said, he had by no means used all my changes, but in some cases he told me I'd "saved his hide."

Mr. Barzun has clearly had some bad luck with copy editors. In that instance where he felt his writing was "mangled," I hope he made it known to his editor that this particular copy editor should not be used again on books like his (or perhaps any books at all; copy editors are generally free-lance and therefore quite disposable). But in the age of the Xerox machine, a mangled manuscript is merely an inconvenience, not a tragedy. An untouched copy is always kept in reserve and can, in an emergency, be copy edited anew, at a loss of just a couple hundred dollars and a week in production time (I know; I have been assigned rush re-copy-editing jobs). In any case, it is not worth getting publicly hot under the collar about. If I so wished, I could easily fill an article a dozen times longer than Mr. Barzun's with complaints that today's authors are narrow-minded and illiterate, drawing upon a mere fraction of the manuscripts I've worked on. I have not, however, come to this conclusion. I do my job because I love fine writing, and I believe it is thriving.

Finally, I cannot refrain from commenting on the anecdote relating how Sir Isaac Newton "prevented a misprint from being corrected in his *Principia*, saying that competent readers would automatically correct it for themselves." Any discerning listener could tell Mr. Barzun that this story speaks not about editorial wisdom but about the eccentricities of genius. If I had copy edited his article, however, I probably would have kept that to myself.

Julia Glass
Brooklyn, New York

Jacques Barzun replies: Julia Glass is one of a good many readers whom my description of copy editors and their work has impelled to write; she is the only one who has not agreed that the description was just.

Her main point is that the persons and the offenses I have cited are unrepresentative. The simplest rebuttal would be to list the book and periodical publishers whose editors unwittingly furnished my evidence—three of the largest five trade publishers in the country; four noted university presses; the oldest two among the national monthlies; the leading daily newspaper.

Those of my correspondents who are themselves editors all admit the charge; I could quote tearful confessions. And the aggrieved authors, edited by still other hands, confirm and amplify the bill of particulars.

So the facts may be taken as established. My critic argues that a whole profession should not be indicted. But professional practices are and must surely remain subject to criticism. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, preachers, politicans must be held to account if the laity is to survive with a whole skin.

With the criticism goes the implicit acknowledgment that worthy exceptions always exist. One would hope that Miss Glass is among them. But some of her remarks, such as that about the author's veto on corrections and the value of good editing, show that she did not read my small essay with the care one ought to expect from a professional scanner of texts. If she brings out as fresh points matters that I have clearly stated, how can we rely on the judgment she passes, not only on what I wrote but also on the work of the authors she professes to improve by her editing? One concludes, regretfully, that her complaint against me helps to prove mine against her guild.

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation (Act of August 12, 1970; Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code)

1. Title, THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR: 2. Date of Filing, October 1, 1985; 3. Frequency, Quarterly—March, June, October, December; 4. Office of Publication, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

6. Names and Addresses of Publisher, Editor: Publisher, The United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009: Editor, Joseph Epstein, 703 Hinman Avenue, Evanston, Illinois 60202.

7. Owner: The United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa, 1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009; No Stockholders.

8. Known Bondholders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities: None.

10. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes have not changed during preceding 12 months.

11. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. of Copies Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. Total No. Copies Printed (Net Press Run)	31,283	32,579
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E. Total Distribution (Sum of C and D)	27,476	28,114
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1. Office Use, Left-over, Unaccounted, Spoiled After Printing	2,683	4,209
2. Returns From News Agent	1,124 to date	256 to date
G. Total (Sum of E&F—should equal net press run shown in A)	31,283	32,579

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